

[novel] digimon adventure: prologue + chapter 1

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小説 デジモンアドベンチャー〈1〉

いま、冒険がはじまる

Prologue

The rulers of darkness

*wish to seal the four pillars of the world by all means
to gain power.*

— “Digimon Book of Revelations,” Chapter 8, Verse 5

In a sky so blue that it looked as if it was freshly painted, something white hurtled through, marring its even surface. Twin engine roars could be heard not far behind, and their source was revealed as red beings charged in, following the white object in hot pursuit.

The white object being chased had smooth skin that appeared to be made of metal. Glittering brightly from the sunlight shining down on it, its extraordinarily long arms — longer than its own body — were carefully clutching several smaller objects that looked similar to eggs.

Its pursuers, on the other hand, were shaped like red cylindrical objects. A countless number of them had merged together into a battle formation, and grenades could be seen being fired from their arms.

The white object swiftly moved left and right to dodge their attacks, but because there were too many enemies attacking it all at once, it could not avoid them perfectly. Many times it got shot in the back, in its shoulders, and one even blasted into the back of its hand.

When that happened, one of the eggs fell from its grasp.

The white object noticed this right away, and tried to fly down to retrieve it, but its pursuers' persistent attacks prevented it from doing so. Gazing back at the falling egg with something akin to regret, the white object ascended once more into the skies to continue its escape.

As the barrage faded into the distance, the falling egg dropped down towards a dense, dark forest that extended for miles...

Chapter 1; Drifting Ashore

① That Summer

“Are you okay?” Taichi Yagami asked his younger sister Hikari as he stuck a cooling gel sheet on her forehead. The poor girl was shivering under the bedcovers with fever.

With the brightest smile she could manage, Hikari said, “Yeah.”

“I see,” Taichi complied, but inside he was berating himself. He now knew in hindsight that she had been showing cold symptoms since yesterday, but because he hadn't recognized them for what they were, he had dragged Hikari out to go shopping with him for things they would bring to camp today (although the shopping list had only consisted of loads of candy).

He *had* thought she was acting strange, but he didn't think that it was because of a cold...

It must have started yesterday morning, when they were watching television together. At that time, a news



broadcast was reporting abnormal weather all around the world. Even though it was midsummer, America was covered in heavy snow, while heavy rain flooded the Middle East. In contradiction to that, the swamps in Southeast Asia dried up completely from drought. The weather forecaster said this was all due to destruction of the environment, but Hikari said,

"He's wrong."

"Eh?" Taichi, who had been stuffing his cheeks with toast topped with egg and round slices of tomato and ham, gave Hikari a strange look.

Hikari's eyes stayed wholeheartedly fixed on the TV screen, which wasn't showing anything in particular as far as Taichi could see. As if in a daze, she softly whispered an unfamiliar word.

"Digi....mon."

"Digimon? What's that?" Taichi asked with raised eyebrows.

This time, Hikari pulled herself away from the screen to give him a wide-eyed look.

"You can't see it, Brother?" she asked in turn.

"See what...?" Taichi looked at the TV screen. "I don't see anything."

"Oh... Never mind then. Don't worry about it," Hikari smiled, before she turned her gaze back to the TV again. Her long eyelashes, as Taichi looked at his younger sister's profile, made her appear somewhat forlorn to him.

She probably got the fever then, Taichi realized now. If he had checked her forehead that time and had allowed her to rest, her cold might have been easily prevented right from the start. Hikari had been looking forward to this camping trip just as much as he was...

○

In noisy crowds that stood before the buses lined up for departure, the children assembled into their assigned groups as they chattered endlessly about the anime that they had seen yesterday, the new video game that was released, the plot developments in the latest weekly manga issue, or about the romantic relationship between two popular idols who had had a lot of publicity lately in a weekly picture magazine.

But Yamato Ishida did not involve himself in any of these groups.

It wasn't because he was lonely. In fact, many of his classmates would greet him with a friendly "Yo!" or "Hi~!" when they came across him and, naturally, Yamato would respond back with a smile.

A small boy wearing a green hat and long-sleeved shirt that was the same color as the sleeveless T-shirt Yamato was wearing, was standing next to Yamato. Although there were many people who spoke to Yamato, none of them spoke to the little boy, and the boy himself never waved his hand in greeting at anyone else. He simply stuck to Yamato's side as he quietly looked around, grinning broadly at his surroundings.

The situation was as it should be, for this little boy was not a part of this school, and thus was not acquainted with any of the students there. He was Yamato's younger brother, Takeru Takaishi. The reason they had different last names was because the two were now living separately because of their parents' divorce. Takeru was allowed to participate in Yamato's school camping trip after receiving special permission from Fujiyama-sensei, the man in charge of organizing it.

Takeru himself didn't appear worried, but Yamato was secretly anxious that Takeru would not be able to get along with the other children. He thought things might be better off if Takeru had never come to begin with.

It all began on the first week of July, right before summer vacation started.

Because their parents had agreed to visitation rights after their divorce was settled, Takeru came to stay the night at Yamato's (and his dad's all-male two-person) apartment in Odaiba. At that time, Takeru's sharp eyes had spotted the date of August 1st on the calendar circled in red. When their father told him that was the day of the school camping trip, Takeru exclaimed that he wanted to go too.

Their father surely must have shared Yamato's feelings of dread. His troubles had increased because that meant calling up his ex-wife and persuading her to agree. Of course, although he complained out loud that it was a bother, his expression didn't make it appear that it really was.

The day before camp, which was yesterday, Yamato went to his mother's residence in Sangenjaya to pick up Takeru.

"You should come over here yourself to play once in awhile, Yamato," his mother said a little awkwardly to her first son as she stuffed Takeru's backpack with snacks until its seams were almost bursting open.

"Yeah."

Even Yamato thought that his own, short reply sounded cold.

"You should," his mother repeated brightly, although her smile was somewhat forced. She already knew, even before their conversation had started, that Yamato would never voluntarily drop by for a visit. Being aware of Yamato's serious personality, she did not doubt that he considered that innocuous action the equivalent to betraying his father.

"Okay, Mama, I'm going now!"

With Takeru's packing completed, his mother accompanied him all the way to the apartment's entrance hall.

"Takeru, don't cause too much trouble for your brother, okay?"

Her words sounded as if she was leaving her only child in custody of a stranger. Of course, she meant no ill-will behind them.

But Yamato couldn't help muttering, "It doesn't matter if he does. We're brothers."

② On The Other Side of the Aurora

Throughout the entire bus ride, Mimi Tachikawa was so absorbed in gossiping with her friends Taako and Mi-chan that she never bothered to look at the gradually changing scenery outside her window. Nor was she interested in doing so anyway. If you were to ask her later what landmarks the bus went through to get to their campgrounds in Mikami Canyon [01], she would have told you that she had no idea.

"Okay, we're here!" Fujiyama-sensei's loud voice was useful to him during the school's morning assemblies, for it could reach all the way to the back of the auditorium without the assistance of a microphone. Within the narrow bus, however, it caused everyone's ears to ring.

"The group you belong in is listed on the printout I gave you before we left. Your leaders will be wearing arm bands with their names on it, so find them using that and stick with your group. After that, listen to what your leader tells you. That is all."

Mimi looked down at the official-looking printout in her hands. In felt-tip pen was handwritten, "Kido Group (Leader: 6th Grade, Jyou Kido)"

"Hey, do you know who Kido is?" Mimi asked Taako, who was sitting next to her. Taako's handout had "Arihara Group" written on it.

"Kido-san would be..." Searching outside the window, it wasn't long before Taako pointed, "Over there!"

The boy she was indicating was dressed neatly in an open-collared shirt and an Ivy League-styled vest. Besides wearing glasses and the arm band that signified he was a leader, his shoulder was burdened by a square-shaped bag labeled "Emergency Food Supply." Perhaps he was also feeling the heavy responsibility that came with being a leader because his face looked a little stiff.

"Hmm... He doesn't seem that reliable..." Mimi mused, but she was interrupted by Mi-chan, who motioned to them hurriedly, saying, "Look, look!"

Mi-chan was pointing at the front of the bus, where a boy wearing a long-sleeved orange shirt was about to get off. Even Mimi knew who he was. They hardly ever talked together, but he was her classmate, Koushiro Izumi. Mi-chan wanted them to look at what Koushiro was carrying on his back – a wireless laptop.

"Isn't he so weird for bringing that all the way to camp?" Mi-chan sneered with mocking laughter, but Mimi didn't laugh. She simply didn't find any reason to.

○

"Hey, Sora!"

Lowering the empty buckets she held with both arms, Sora stopped walking down the stone steps leading to the water supply to see the person who had called out to her coming up. It was Kenji, the self-proclaimed "Akita of Odaiba," [02] who played defense on Sora's soccer team.

"What is it?" Sora asked him.

"Do you know where Taichi is? I can't find him anywhere."

"No idea," Sora said bluntly. "We're in different groups, so of course I won't know."

"Oh," Kenji nodded in understanding, but he grumbled under his breath as he continued his ascent up the stairs. Because of the smooth two-top coordination that Taichi and Sora showed within their soccer plays, he must have gotten the mistaken impression that they shared a telepathic link. Perhaps he thought Sora would use it to get Taichi to come flying out to see him.

When she reached the water supply, Sora turned on the faucets to fill the two buckets. A small brook gurgled nearby, but due to sanitary conditions, their printouts had specifically pointed out (underlined with a thick wavy line and everything) that they were to use the water from the water supply for cooking.

After the buckets were filled to the top, Sora grabbed one in each hand and climbed back up the stone steps. The weight of the buckets made her arms feel like they were being pulled from their sockets.

Normally this task would have been left to the boys, while the girls were assigned easier work (such as cutting vegetables, or gossiping as they gathered firewood). However, Sora disliked doing such things. As a person who ordinarily never wore a skirt if she could help it, she consciously denied her position as a girl. Such masculine traits of hers were only further reinforced after she'd joined the all-male soccer club.

Sweat began to appear on Sora's brow, and she lowered the buckets onto the ground to wipe it with her arm. Bothered by the hair that clung around her eyes, she took off her hat to fix the messy strands. Freed from its confines, her short hair stuck up in odd directions.

After resettling her hat in its rightful place, she squared herself and said, "Now then."

The buckets held once again in her grasp, she was just about to continue climbing the stairs when she noticed Taichi above her, napping on the branch of a thick tree with his arms propped behind his head. "Taichi, what are you doing over there?"

Not bothering to move his posture, Taichi simply lifted his head to look down in Sora's direction.

"Nothing," he answered lazily.

Even when she said, "Kenji was looking for you,"

"Oh, okay," was his sluggish reply.

Deducing that Taichi was slacking off from his duties, Sora knew that anything she said to him when he was like this was futile. So instead, she asked him something that had been bothering her since they had gotten here.

"By the way, I haven't seen Hikari-chan around." Sora had heard from Hikari herself that she was very excited about today's camping trip.

"Yeah... she had a fever."

"A summer cold?" Sora asked sympathetically.

"I guess."

"I see. That's too bad."

"Yeah..." Taichi trailed off when he noticed that something white was drifting down in front of his eyes.

What's that? he wondered, and reached out a hand to the sky. Feeling a small tingling of cold on the back of his hand, he brought it back to see a drop of water on his skin. It may seem hard to believe, but it was snow.

"Hey, it's snowing," Taichi called out to Sora below, but she had already noticed. A gust of wind, causing large snowflakes to whirl wildly behind Taichi, had caught her eye.

"It looks like there's going to be a blizzard," Sora shouted up at him. "Let's hurry back to the others!"

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"I don't believe this."

Staring out the window of the small shrine [03] he had secluded himself in, the smell of its rotten wood tickling his nostrils, Koushiro Izumi whispered to himself in blank amazement. The sudden snowstorm had blotted out the summer greenery with white in the twinkling of an eye.

"It must be due to the abnormal weather we've been having."

Resigning himself to the fact that he wouldn't be able to leave this place for awhile, Koushiro brought his Pineapple laptop onto his lap and waited for it to boot up as he connected it to his cellular phone.

His laptop's OS flicked on. With an ease that showed he was accustomed to doing this, he double-clicked the icon to his Internet browser and attempted to connect to a major search engine he had bookmarked. He wanted to check the homepage of the latest weather forecast.

The sound of the modem, and then the fast forward dialing from his cellular phone could be heard within the silence. However, the sounds that signaled he was connected to the Internet did not follow.

"This snowstorm must be interfering with reception."

Yet he was unable to give up. Just as he was about to attempt re-connecting once more, the sliding door of the shrine burst open and two boys stomped in, their heads topped with snow.

Without consciously realizing what he was doing, Koushiro must have glared at the intruders for entering without knocking and stepping all over the floor with their shoes on, because the taller, and obviously older, of the two boys apologized.

"Sorry." It was Yamato. "Can we stay here until the snow stops?"

"I don't mind," Koushiro politely replied, a little flustered.

"Thanks," Yamato said, before he turned to dust off the snow that covered Takeru's hat and clothes.

As the snow continued to fall with no sign of stopping, other children arrived at the shrine to take shelter.

The oldest, wearing the arm band of a leader, Jyou Kido.

Koushiro's classmate, Mimi Tachikawa.

Sora Takenouchi.

And, an acquaintance Koushiro only knew through the required school club they shared, Taichi Yagami.

At that time, none of the children would have ever imagined that the seven people gathered here would soon find themselves involved in a long, long adventure.

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The snowstorm gradually stopped.

As they stepped out of the shrine, the children were unable to hide their bewilderment as they surveyed the snowscape that looked incompatible against the blue summer sky.

"Yay!" With a whoop of enjoyment, Takeru jumped down onto the snow and scooped up a handful to form a ball.

"Hey, Brother. We can have a snowball fight!"

"I... guess so," Yamato said kindly as he attentively watched over his cute younger brother. Next to him, a voice interrupted.

"Just what the hell is going on here?" Taichi asked. The question wasn't directed at anyone in particular. Taichi often had a bad habit of saying what he was thinking.

Unaware of that, Jyou raised his head to look up at the sky. Pushing his glasses up, he explained, "There was probably a cold air mass in the skies that caused it to snow. Maybe it traveled here all the way from America."

"Hmm," Mimi said, sounding impressed. "You must be pretty smart, Jyou-senpai."

"Oh, it's nothing like that," Jyou said modestly, although his face showed more than a hint of pride. Watching him, Taichi decided that they would not get along. Jyou's skin was sickly pale, even though it was the middle of summer. He must've been so absorbed with cram school that he'd never even gone swimming in a pool once this entire summer.

"Anyway, Jyou," Yamato said. The reason he didn't add honorifics to Jyou's name was because he thought they were in the same grade. "Has the snowstorm passed?"

"Yeah, it has. You see how there are no clouds in the sky? No matter how cold the temperature is, the snow won't be able to form without clouds. That's common sense," Jyou lectured boastfully, before he caught himself. "Ah... um, I didn't mean that you guys don't have any common sense by that. Don't get the wrong impression."

His cover-up sounded weak, and he knew it. Seeing Yamato's eyebrows fur for a split second into an annoyed expression, Jyou realized that he had screwed up.

"Hey, by the way," said Takeru, who had been in the middle of making a snowman. He stopped patting snow to point at the sky. "What is that? It's not a cloud, is it?"

Everyone looked up.

An enormous, transparent curtain that shone iridescently like a soap bubble was fluttering gently above them.

"Is that... an aurora?" Sora asked, her eyes wide with disbelief. "But, being able to see an aurora in Japan is just..."

Suddenly, something unbelievable happened, a mysterious spectacle that drew everyone's attention. Right at that moment, within the aurora, something glimmered. It wasn't coming from just one source, but many.

Thinking that his eyes were playing tricks, Taichi shut and opened them again. The lights were still there. They weren't flickering any longer, but glowing stronger and stronger. It wasn't long before Taichi realized that that was because these lights were heading towards them.

"Something's coming!"

Sora and Yamato had also noticed. "They're balls of light! Are they meteorites?"

Even Mimi and Jyou, with his weak eyesight, were soon able to see them as the lights approached closer and closer. There were seven spheres of light in all.

"Watch out!"

All of them dove for cover. Yamato threw himself over Takeru to protect him.

BANG!

The force of the impact caused a pillar of snow more than two meters high to rise up. One could only imagine the staggering amount of power behind it to have caused such a thing. Fortunately, none of the children were hurt.

"That was scary," Mimi said as she stood up. Her face, however, was not as pale as Jyou's, who had been standing next to her. In fact, she appeared to be slightly amused, as if the entire thing had been an accident.

"What in the world are they?" Driven by curiosity, Koushiro ran to the spot where the pillar of snow had risen. The mysterious falling objects had plunged deep into the dirt, forming large holes in the layer of snow that rested above it.

Koushiro was about to dig his hand through one of the holes when, with a "Hyah!", he quickly drew it back.

A beam of soft light shot out from inside the holes, and something came floating out. There were seven of them in all.

"Wh—What is that?!" Taichi asked, his voice raised at a hysterical pitch.

The seven unknown objects that emitted light as gentle as a bride's silk headdress flew individually into each child's hand.

"This is..."

It was a piece of equipment with a screen similar to a pager. On its surface, one could see particles of light creating a haze of colors.

All seven of the things began to beep furiously.

The instant that happened, the aurora above them started to shake violently, as though it were a curtain being blown savagely by a squall.

"Is it because of the electromagnetic waves?" Koushiro murmured to himself, but even he knew it was a baseless



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hypothesis.

The aurora's trembling grew more aggressive, appearing as if it would pull itself from the heavens and fly away at any moment. The surface of the sky itself began to shine brightly.

At the same time, something impossible happened.

Even though the children were on a tall mountain, sufficiently high above sea level, water exploded upwards, rising vertically to show its large smooth surface. Its center parted open to reveal water going in, as though it were a huge waterfall on its side. With a thunderous roar, it sucked in the air surrounding it. The cold atmosphere was not being drawn to the bottom, but to someplace parallel to the ground.

And then...

"Uwaaaaaaaah!"

Seized by a power they could not dispute, the seven children were sucked inside.

③ Mysterious Animals

They had waited a long, long time just to meet their partners.

Their memories went very far. They could remember the glacier that had first covered the ground surface, although it had long since melted away by now. They could remember when vegetation had first sprouted out of the bare earth and grown thickly into the lush environment they now resided in.

Although no one had taught them, they knew how to speak words. They even knew what their names were, and who they were waiting for. However, what they did not know was, for what purpose.

And yet, they waited.

Confident that their partners would arrive from the skies, they faced the heavens day after day, calling out the names of their respective partners.

One of them said "Taichi!"

Another said, "Yamato!"

And others pitched in with, "Sora!", "Jyou!", "Koushiro-han!", "Mimi!", "Takeru!".....

One day, the one who was waiting for "Takeru" saw the aurora in the sky.

"Look, everyone!"

All of them looked up.

Instinctively knowing that the fated time had arrived, each of them stood still with bated breath. Some of them were so overcome with emotion that they even had tears glistening in their eyes.

The sky glimmered brightly for an instant, and then they heard screaming from far away.

"Uwaaaaaaaah!"

Immediately accompanying the terrified cries were seven children, who they could see were lumped together in a mass of arms and legs as they plummeted to the ground.

"TAICHI! TAICHI! TAICHI!"

"YAMATO! YAMATO! YAMATO!"

So happy were they that they jumped great leaps of joy as each of them repeatedly called the name of the partner they had been longing for. When a force separated the children still in the air into seven different directions, each of them eyed the spot where they anticipated their partner would land, and hurriedly dispersed.

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With a dull thump, Yamato hit land.

"Ow!" he cried out in reflex, but the truth was, it hadn't hurt that much at all. Surprised by the lack of pain he was expecting, Yamato looked up at the sky.

He was so certain that he had just been falling from high up there, very close to the stratosphere. Could he have been hallucinating? As his body had spun through the air during the drop, he'd thought he'd seen glimpses of something that looked like an island underneath him ...

"That's weird." Yamato murmured, his head still tilted upwards as he stood up.

A quick look around his surroundings confirmed that he was in the woods. For a moment he thought he was somewhere on the campgrounds, but the humidity that clung to his arms made him quickly change his mind. If this

was really camp, it should have been much cooler weather...

Anyway, more important matters were at hand.

"Hey, Takeru!" He called out his younger brother's name. When he didn't receive a response, he tried again.

"Takeru?"

Turning in every direction, he repeated the same name over and over. But Takeru's voice could not be heard anywhere.

Yamato could feel the blood draining away from him. *If something happened to Takeru, what should I...?*

"Takeru! Takeru!!"

Half-crazed, Yamato continued to call out Takeru's name over and over. The face of his mother when she had left him floated through his mind.

"Takeru! Where are you, Takeru?!"

The corners of the boy's eyes ached with a burning sensation. His chest felt like it would flatten under the heavy load of his worry. If he ended up being unable to find Takeru...

That was when he heard a shy voice say, "Yama...to?"

"Who's there?" Yamato shot back, stopping abruptly.

Although he couldn't see anyone around, a chestnut-colored stuffed doll with a horn on its head dropped to the ground beside him. Yamato wasn't sure how it was made to do it, but it blinked its eyes, and —

"You're Yamato... right?"

— its mouth moved to the sound of words, as if it were really a living being.

"Eh...?"

Yamato had no idea what was going on, but he still had enough of his wits about him to know not to fall for a talking plushie.

Searching his surroundings wildly, he said, "Who are you? Come on out!"

And that was when, as if to emphasize its existence, the stuffed toy jumped up and down.

"It's me, Yamato! Tsunomon! I've been waiting for you for such a long time!"

Yamato's mouth dropped open. And stayed open.

Tsunomon spoke. "You're looking for Takeru, right? I'll take you to him! I'm sure Tokomon has already found Takeru by now."

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Sora became very still. If seeing the strange pink animal with a blue flower decorated on its head wasn't enough, it had even spoken words to her.

"....."

She considered screaming for help, but it would be terrible if that caused this creature to get excited.

The animal spoke up once more. "I've always, always, always been waiting for you, Sora!" it said excitedly. Its words were clear and understandable. "That's why I'm so glad to finally meet you!"

The thing wriggled the many protuberances underneath its head (she couldn't tell if they were feet or tentacles) to approach Sora, and she immediately took a step back.

"D—Don't come near me!" Sora shrieked hysterically, in a voice that was unlike her usual self.

Its flower drooping upon hearing those words, the animal said sadly, "Sora... Do you hate me?"

"I—It's not that I hate you, it's just," Sora stammered frantically as she kept her distance, "What the heck are you?!"

"I'm Pyocomon. I just said that earlier."

"No, what I'm asking is, what *is* a Pyocomon?!"

"Pyocomon is Pyocomon," the thing said simply, "Just like Sora is Sora."

Gazing at Sora with its upturned eyes, it looked at her like a baby starving for the love of its parent. While Sora's heart couldn't help but go out to that expression, it made her feel uncomfortable at the same time. Although she wanted to vehemently deny it, its large eyes playfully enticed the maternal instincts which had lain dormant within Sora to awaken.

Biting her lip, Sora then heaved a great sigh.

"All right, fine," she said resignedly. The affection she could feel from those bright blue eyes had stolen her of her

wariness. "In any case... at least one thing I know for sure around here is that you're called Pyocomon."

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Rubbing a leaf between his fingers, Koushiro murmured another "How mysterious."

"This isn't a real leaf... It's similar to the green plastic grass you see in bentō boxes [04], the kind they sell in convenience stores," he observed. "Nevertheless, I'm quite impressed to see something as sophisticated as this."

He was in a considerably vast forest. The branches of all the trees in this forest had leaf upon leaf attached to them, and although it wasn't an impossible task to do, it must have taken a lot of labor to replicate everything and make the forest appear so realistic. Even people with untrained eyes would have agreed with Koushiro that it would have been cheaper economically to just plant real trees in their place.

It wasn't just the leaves. The pebbles at his feet looked like gray cubes of sugar that crushed just as easily, and the solid earth looked like dark caramel that was just as tough.

"So, let me ask you again..." Koushiro said to the elaborately-made creature next to him. It had never left his side ever since it had found him. "You say this place is called File Island?"

"That's right." This creature that called itself Motimon (its insides were probably made up of very high-powered transceivers) stuck out its chest as it answered proudly.

"I must say, this theme park is made extraordinarily well."

"Um... Koushiro-han? What's a theme park?"

"You don't know?"

"Nope."

Perhaps the opening date for this park was a long way off, Koushiro thought, and the person speaking through this machine (whose accent was clearly from the Kansai region [05] of Japan) was playing dumb.

That was why Koushiro was able to say, "Well, never mind," with an indulgent smile.

"Anyway, Koushiro-han. Everyone else is waiting, so let's hurry back to them."

When he had touched Motimon's round body, it had felt like rubber. Maybe it was created from that foam rubber Hollywood was known for using in its creations. Although a pretty expensive process, it was probably nothing but snack money to these people, if the lengths they had gone to create this artificial forest were anything to go by.

"Okay, I got it. Can you take me there?"

"Okay!"

The creature looked almost beside itself with happiness as it moved along the ground in a shuffling walk. Koushiro reasoned to himself that it must have wheels hidden underneath.

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In all eleven years of his life, Jyou could honestly swear that he had never dealt with anything as utterly and unexplainably bizarre as this.

A strange animal that looked like an experiment between a seal and a sea horse gone wrong was chasing after him. In a mischievous voice, it cried out, "Jyooou!" as it floated in the air.

"Wait for me, Jyooou!"

He would have been able to convince himself that "Jyooou" was an animal roar similar to "Gyaooo" or "Uwooo," except that the "Wait for me" bit was clearly Japanese. Maybe the structure of its vocal cords was similar to the mynah or the parrot. But even so, wasn't the thing a little *too* fluent?!

Which led him to a single conclusion — A *monster*?

The minute he thought that, Jyou screamed, "That's impossible! It's too unrealistic!!!"

So could this mean this was a dream?

But upon meeting him, the animal had immediately rubbed Jyou's cheek with something that looked very much like a flipper. In fact, it was *exactly* like a flipper. That slippery feeling, and the stinky smell of raw fish from its breath, told Jyou that this was absolutely, positively *not* a dream. Although it was extremely hard to believe, this was hard, stone cold reality.

"Why are you running away?" shouted the incarnation chasing behind him, its very existence bulldozing over the common sense Jyou had so carefully cultivated throughout his eleven years. Jyou could only run for his life.

In any case, this must be the first time that Jyou had ever used all of his energy to run like this. His pounding heart felt like it was trying to explode through his chest. That figure of speech “heartbreak” must not have been an exaggeration after all.

Wait, this isn’t the time to be thinking about that.

Jyou screamed. “Please, I’m begging you!!! Go away!!! Just leave me alone!!!”

His voice was so strained from his exertions that it was almost shameful to hear.

○

“Takeru!”

With Tsunomon leading him through the forest, Yamato came upon Takeru along the way rather abruptly.

“Ah, Brother!”

Takeru raced towards him happily. Yamato searched Takeru’s face for traces of tears, but couldn’t find any. He had been so sure that Takeru would be crying helplessly without him around.

Within his arms, Takeru was holding a... a piggy bank? No, a katoributa [06]? — some object with a pudgy comical shape. Realizing where Yamato’s gaze was directed at, Takeru replied, “Ah, let me introduce you. This is Tokomon,” and shoved the ornament-thing up at Yamato’s face.

“Hello, Yamato!” it squeaked.

It wasn’t an ornament at all. Just like the Tsunomon that had brought him here, it was a living animal that could speak words.

“Tokomon said that he’s been waiting for us for a really, really long time,” Takeru explained to Yamato. Then he turned to Tokomon and said, “Right?”

Smiling with its entire face, Tokomon agreed brightly. “Right!”

His younger brother readily accepted the existence of these strange beings. Yamato could only be tongue-tied with awe at Takeru’s ability to quickly conform to his environment. Perhaps because Takeru was still a child, his belief in Santa Claus and the tooth fairy hadn’t even disappeared yet. Apparently the harsh reality of their parents’ divorce had not poisoned Takeru’s pure soul, and Yamato found himself to be glad that his little brother still kept such innocence.

“Tokomon said that there are more of his friends around,” Takeru said excitedly, “There’s Koromon, and Tanemon, and Pukamon, and Pyocomon, and who else..... Tsunomon!”

“Tsunomon... would be me,” Tsunomon said, its cheeks glowing bashfully.

“Oh, I see. It’s nice to meet you!” Takeru greeted it with a small bow. “I’m Takeru Takaishi.”

After exchanging greetings, Tsunomon exclaimed, “Come on, let’s go to the others!” and bounded off with hurried jumps. Takeru ran after it, still carrying Tokomon in his arms.

And Yamato was left standing stock-still, unable to comprehend this situation.

The only answer he could come up with, that satisfied him, was that this was a dream. He must be dreaming that he was with Takeru in this fantasy land so he could temporarily forget about reality. If that was the case, then it probably wasn’t a bad idea to play along for a little while.

A sheepish smile forming on his lips, Yamato raced after Takeru.

○

When Taichi landed, he had lost consciousness with his hand tightly clutched around the small device that had appeared from within the aurora. Now that object was blinking furiously as it flashed bright light.

“M—Mmm...”

Taichi finally opened his eyes, but it wasn’t because of the light flashing in them that had woken him up. Settled right in front of his face was a pink thing that looked like a rugby ball. Someone had drawn large red eyes on its surface, which inexplicably blinked as they stared down at him. The bottom half of the rugby ball split open to display a large mouth glistening with small, sharp fangs, and it spoke,

“Taichi! Taichi!”

—It spoke.

Taichi's body immediately went rigid.

"H—Hya!? Wh—What the heck?!"

Its round cat-like eyes crinkling, the thing gave a toothy grin as its entire face glowed with happiness. "Taichi, you're awake! That's great!"

And then it tried to leap at Taichi's face. Reacting more out of sheer surprise than anything, Taichi pushed a hand in front to stop it and rose hurriedly to his feet.

"Y—You can talk?! How do you know my name?! What the hell are you?!"

Confusion raging in his mind, Taichi could only shoot off questions in rapid succession.

The pink rugby ball introduced itself. "I'm Koromon!"

"Koromon... Wait, so you're Koromon because you're small and round [07]?" Taichi asked.

"Um..."

Koromon itself didn't seem to know where its name originated from, so it cheerfully answered, "I'm not sure about that... but anyway, I've been waiting forever for you Taichi!"

And then it tried leaping at Taichi again.

But Taichi swerved his body to avoid it. "What do you mean you've waited for me?!"

Just then, the tall grass nearby rustled and the junior [08] that Taichi knew from their club, Koushiro, poked his head out of the wilderness.

"Koushiro!" Taichi cried out in relief.

But upon seeing the pink mollusk-like animal moving beneath the other boy's feet, Taichi went on to exclaim, "Th—There's another one! What the heck are these weird things?!"

"It claims that it's a Digimon," Koushiro replied, shrugging his shoulders to indicate that he was also confused. "Apparently this place is called File Island. Have you ever heard of it?"

"File... Island?" Taichi had never heard of it before. "Wait, so this is an island?"

"I believe so."

"Hmm..."

Curling a hand around his chin in thought, Taichi walked over to a sturdy tree nearby and climbed its trunk as easily as a monkey. Settling on a branch, he brought out a mini-telescope from within his shorts' pocket to view his surroundings.

"Let's see..."

In front of him, he could see the forest stretched out for miles. What lay beyond it was hazy to him. To his left towered a steep white mountain, so high that its summit was covered by thick clouds. To his right sparkled a bright blue ocean, looking as picture-perfect as the ones you'd expect to see celebrities posing in front of in magazines.

"I guess with that ocean there, it really does mean this place is an island..."

Thinking he should ask Koushiro for his opinion, Taichi shoved his telescope back into his pocket and leapt out of the tree.

He got straight to the point. "I saw an ocean, but it may have been a lake."

"It doesn't matter whether it was an ocean or a lake," Koushiro said. "It still means we're not in Mikami Canyon."

"But there's still Mount Fuji, isn't there? Look, see that mountain over there?" Taichi said, pointing to the jagged-looking mountain on his left.

"That doesn't look like Mount Fuji to me," Koushiro retorted with a sigh.

Next to him, Motimon piped up in its confident voice, "That's called Infinity Mountain." [09]

"Infinity Mountain?"

"That's right."

Taichi and Koushiro shot dubious looks at each other. Neither of them had heard of that name before.

While they were figuring things out, the other children soon gathered around them. Each of them was lead by a Digimon partner made of various shapes.



Sora and Pyocomon.

Yamato and Tsunomon.

Takeru and Tokomon.

And, with a piercing scream that announced his arrival,

"GYAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!"

Jyou appeared.

When he recognized the familiar faces he had met in the shrine, Jyou sighed with relief. Sadly it was blown away when his gaze shifted to the monsters lying at their feet.

Stiffening, Jyou's face paled even further as he let out a wail. "...Th—There's more of them."

Losing his strength, he plopped onto the dirt. This was how the seal-and-sea-horse mutant monster finally caught up to him.

Zooming happily into Jyou's back, it said cheerfully with its rank, fishy breath, "I'm Pukamon! Pleased to meet'cha!"

Jyou stared back at it dumbfounded, as if he was seeing the world crumbling before his very eyes.

Looking around, Yamato asked, "Is this all of us? I think I remember one more person who was with us at the shrine."

"Oh!" Jyou's head snapped up as he cried out in realization. "Mimi-kun! Mimi Tachikawa-kun isn't here!"

○

Tanemon was having a hard time answering Mimi's question.

"Where did I come from?" it echoed, tilting its head. "But I've always been here..."

Mimi did not believe it for a minute.

"That can't be right! I know what you really are!" she insisted. "So... what planet did you come from? Go on, tell me!"

Mimi had never believed in UFOs. The subject was hardly even brought up as a topic of discussion among her friends and family. But when this strange creature suddenly appeared in front of her and she realized she wasn't dreaming, how else could she explain it? Surely this leafy being must be an alien that had come from outer space.

I mean, think about it, Mimi reasoned to herself inside her mind. The universe is very a big place. It probably didn't come from a planet in our solar system, but it would make perfect sense to find tons of E.T. living around the nebula in the Magellanic Clouds.

"I was always here, waiting for you, Mimi..." Tanemon spoke to Mimi, as if it were appealing to her. It fidgeted with its small limbs (or at least Mimi thought they were) as it looked at her apologetically.

What does that mean?

Mimi's thin eyebrows furrowed as she frowned in thought. Maybe this wasn't Earth at all? Maybe the water that had shown up in front of the shrine was actually a UFO? Maybe the aliens had beamed her up and flown billions of light-years away and brought her to this planet that looked so much like Earth where she will spend her days for the rest of her life?!

"I don't like that!" Mimi cried out shrilly. "If that's true, then take me back home! Take me back home to my Papa and Mama right now!"

Mimi was actually a very nice, well-behaved girl by nature. It was just that, in some cases, she would respond to the inner logic she had formed within her head with disregard for what was actually said to her during the conversation. It often caused many people – even friends – who were talking with her to become very, very confused and unable to know how to carry on their conversation.

In other words, Mimi would get angry, cry, or laugh at the drop of a hat, regardless of what topic they were previously talking about, and the person she had been talking to would be left with absolutely no idea on how to deal with her.

That was exactly what was happening right now.

In Tanemon's eyes, Mimi had gotten upset when it mentioned that it had waited for Mimi, and now it thought those words were the cause of Mimi's anger. The thought saddened it, because Tanemon wanted Mimi's acknowledgment and appreciation more than anyone else.

Tanemon was also not the type to delve too long into logical thinking. When Mimi yelled, it didn't really understand

why but it became increasingly sad and wretched. To express those feelings, it burst into tears.

"Even if you ask me to do that, I..." Tanemon trailed off into sobs.

Mystified at the alien's sudden wailing outburst, Mimi instantly became silent. Perhaps the aliens from the Tanemon Planet were actually very nice and they simply wanted to be friends with earthlings. Although she was picked by them at random to represent the Earth, treating their offer like this would be very bad form on her part. It would be ridiculous to believe that this little mess-up would cause Earth and the Tanemon Planet to wage war, but Mimi still agreed that it was necessary to form friendly relations first.

"Oh, don't cry. Please don't cry." Mimi soothingly apologized to Tanemon as though she were comforting a small child. "I'm sorry. It was my mistake. You're right, I'm sure the two of us can become friends. So, come on, dry those eyes."

Flashing her beautiful trademark smile, which had captured the hearts of many male students, she held out her hand to Tanemon to offer a handshake. In this pose, it wouldn't have seemed out of place if Mimi's shoulder bore the insignia with the words "Ambassador of International Peace."

".....Okay."

Tanemon stopped crying, but it was puzzled over how to respond to Mimi's outstretched hand. Unsurely, it stretched out a leaf from the top of its head and touched Mimi's hand shyly.

And the commemorative first contact between Earth and the Tanemon Planet has been successful! Mimi thought with a relieved sigh, when all of a sudden — a loud "vrrrmmmm" sound droned above their heads.

It must be a UFO, Mimi thought.

④ Attack of the Kuwagata Monster

"Kyaaaaaaah!"

A young girl's scream, shrill enough to rip a hole through silk, reached their ears.

"It's Mimi-kun!" Jyou cried out in alarm. But because he did not have the courage to take the initiative, he turned to Taichi and Yamato instead and asked hesitantly, "Wh—What do you think happened to her...?"

Instead of answering him, Taichi broke into a run. He had heard Mimi's scream reverberating from their right — in the direction of the ocean.

"Wait, Taichi!"

"Taichi-san!"

Sora and Koushiro chased after him. Yamato had a late start because he urged Takeru to climb onto his back first.

"W—Wait! I'm coming too!" In the end, Jyou tagged along, bringing up the rear.

Mimi, with a small Digimon that looked like a plant bulb at her heels, was heading from the children's left towards their right.

"What's wrong?!" Taichi asked, when behind Mimi came a thunderous "vrrrmmmm," bringing along a sudden gust of wind that scattered leaves all over the ground.

"Wh—What's that sound?" Sora asked, to which Koushiro immediately answered, "Look up there! There's something in the skies!"

The leaves of the overgrown trees made it hard to see what it was, but Mimi's screams continued.

"I don't know what's up there, but we have to save her!" Using the swift legs that he prized, Taichi chased after Mimi. Sora lined up perfectly next to him, keeping pace. Clearly, being the two-top team that the Odaiba's soccer club boasted of was not just for show. Koushiro did his best to keep up behind them, while the additional weight of his brother on one set of legs dragged Yamato quite a distance behind Koushiro. Jyou was even further behind.

"Kyaaaaaaaah!"

Now the children could see Mimi. Perhaps she had heard the others' voices and turned from under her pursuer's nose, or maybe she was running randomly through the forest and just happened to come upon them, but whatever the case, she was rushing towards Taichi and the others at full speed and...

"AH!" Taichi and the others cried out. It was finally clear to them what was chasing after Mimi: An unbelievably gigantic stag beetle with a bright red body that was almost harsh on the eyes. The ear-splitting roar of sound and gusts of wind were caused from its enormous wings.

"It's a stag beetle monster!" Koushiro yelled.

Next to him, Motimon corrected, “No! It’s Kuwagamon!” [10] but its words were drowned out by the clamorous buzzing of the monster’s wings.

“Nooooo!” As Mimi ran, she could hear the thick snapping of wood as the enormous stag beetle chopped apart the branches with its pincers as it closed in behind her.

“Look out!”

The monster chomped noisily as if it was testing its bite — open and close, open and close — approaching until Mimi could almost feel the sharp edges of it grazing at her back. And then this time the pincers opened widely for its final bite and the monster screamed in triumphant anticipation before Sora ran across from Mimi and tackled her to the ground. They avoided death only by a hair’s breadth: So close were they that the sound of its pincers closing on air rang painfully through Sora’s ear canal, a heavy metallic sound like two large hammers hitting each other.

After looking up to make sure the monster had flown off, Sora turned her head down to Mimi and asked her, “Are you all right?”

Both of them had mud and dead leaves stuck on their clothes and hair. Mimi herself couldn’t seem to believe that she was still alive and she dove into Sora’s arms, bursting into frightened tears.

“There, there,” Sora said soothingly as she gently patted Mimi’s long hair. “You’re safe now.”

But... “It’s coming here again!” Yamato hollered. Far away and high in the sky, the children could see the stag beetle monster make a wide U-turn and head in their direction again.

“What do we do?!” Jyou asked Taichi with wild panic in his eyes. Unconsciously, Jyou felt that Taichi was someone he could depend on.

“What...” Taichi himself did not have a plan. His desire to beat it before it killed them was strong, but just how to go about doing that, he had absolutely no idea.

“We don’t have any weapons to defend ourselves with...” Koushiro reasoned, evaluating the situation.

“Then what?” Jyou shook with fear as his eyes fixed on the stag beetle monster closing on them.

“Let’s run!” Yamato suggested. The weight of Takeru on his back made him choose to be passive, as long as it kept his younger brother safe.

“All right, let’s run!” Frustrated that he could not think of another option, Taichi agreed.

○

Vrrrrmmmm... vrrrrmmmm...

The stag beetle monster continued to attack the children, but whenever it did, they would flatten against the dirt and leap into the thick grass, just barely escaping with their lives.

Even so, they didn’t know if they could keep running away forever. The moment they ran out of stamina would be the exact moment they became stag beetle food. As much as they wanted to believe that their smaller selves held more stamina than this monster, they couldn’t.

BOOM! Its pincers hit thick rock and, Vrrrrmmmm..., the sound of its wings dwindled away.

“All right, it’s gone!”

The children cautiously stepped out from the shade of the rock ledge they were hiding in (the front half of it had been blasted to pieces by the monster’s previous attack).

“If only there was a cave around here somewhere...” Yamato whispered. Turning to look down at Tsunomon, he asked, “Do you know of any?”

Tsunomon shook its head, looking sincerely apologetic. “No. I’m sorry.”

“Er, it’s not your fault...” It was Yamato who ended up feeling shamed for the trouble.

“Anyway, we shouldn’t just stand here. Let’s hurry and get a move on,” Jyou said as he stood up. He had finally recovered from his panic at seeing the monster for the first time, and once again felt responsibility as both the oldest and group leader.

The children set off once again. Tokomon rode backwards on top of Takeru’s hat so it could keep an eye out behind them. Now it cried, “It’s coming again!” and all of a sudden Taichi, who was in the lead, stopped.

“Aw crap!”

The children saw right away what was blocking him. What lay in their path was not more road, but a precipitous cliff.

"Can we climb down this?" Sora asked as she looked over the edge. Below them was a thick, dark jungle that made her think of the Amazon, with a stream that wound through it like a snake. Not even adults, let alone the children, could get down from this calamitous height.

"It's coming!" Tokomon yelled, baring fierce fangs that no one would have expected of from its cute appearance.

"No more!" Mimi cried with tears running down her cheeks.

As if acting on an invisible signal, the Digimon who had clung to the children all this time started to walk away. They began to retrace their steps back to where they'd come from, dragging themselves, or hopping, or moving on tiny feet.

"Wh—What's wrong, Koromon?" Taichi asked it, looking puzzled. "If you're leaving us, at least tell us where you're going!"

"We'll never leave you," Koromon said, looking back at him. Its face was set with a look of tragic determination.

Koromon and the other Digimon went past the rear of the children (this was where Yamato and Takeru were), and lined up sideways as if they were soccer players forming a body wall to block a free kick into the goal post.

"We'll protect all of you, Taichi!"

Saying these words resolutely, Koromon turned a fierce glare at the stag beetle monster. His eyes gleamed with the spirit of the challenged who at last took up the gauntlet.

○

"Stop! Don't!"

Taichi and the others would have turned their faces away if they could. But their worry overcame their fear and they looked on.

It was obvious that these small Digimon were no match against this enormous stag beetle monster, yet they challenged it to battle. First, Koromon and the others spouted what looked like bubbles from their mouths. Perhaps these bubbles were extremely acidic, because the monster unexpectedly fell from balance and its pincers dug into the earth. Without a pause, Koromon and the others pressed on with their attack.

But once the stag beetle monster repositioned itself, the severe counters it gave the smaller Digimon with its six limbs, stiff wings, and sharp pincers hurt them two or three times more than they did to it.

The children couldn't stand watching anymore.

"Why?! Why are you going so far to protect us?!"

Without even a moan passing its lips when the stag beetle monster slapped it violently into a large tree trunk, Koromon immediately leapt at the enemy again. What gave strength to Koromon was its determined purpose and desire to protect Taichi. Of course, the other Digimon — Tsunomon, Pyocomon, Motimon, Tanemon, Pukamon, and Tokomon — were the same.

Taichi and the others may not understand, but we have always, always waited for them. We dreamt that when they came, we would do so many things together. We must fight so that those dreams become a reality. And we must win. There's not a chance that we'll let our dreams be crushed in a place like this!

But we know with our own bodies how powerless we are. There is a wall of overwhelming odds before us. We can't climb over it with our physical strength, our offensive ability, or even with our willpower.

We want power. We want to be stronger, stronger, much stronger.

Taichi screamed. "KOROMON!"

Yamato, "TSUNOMON!"

Sora, "PIYOMON!"

Koushiro, "MOTIMON!"

Mimi, "TANEMON!"

Takeru, "TOKOMON!"

And even Jyou cried out, "Pu—PUKAMON!"



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It was then that seven streaks of light came down from the heavens and engulfed their Digimon.

"What's that?"

For a second, the children lost sight of their Digimon within the bright light.

"I—It can't be..."

But in the next instant, Child Level Digimon who had accomplished "evolution" appeared before them.

"Koromon, evolve! Agumon! Baby Flame!" — A cream-colored Digimon shaped like a small dinosaur spat out a breath of fire.

"Tsunomon, evolve! Gabumon! Petit Fire!" — A wolf-like Digimon standing on two legs spouted a ball of fire.

"Pyocomon, evolve! Piyomon! Magical Fire!" — A pink bird Digimon shot out a spiral of mysterious fire.

"Motimon, evolve! Tentomon! Petit Thunder!" — The red ladybug Digimon's electric attack looked similar to lightning.

"Tanemon, evolve! Palmon! Poison Ivy!" — A green Digimon with a bright red plume on her head stretched out her hands, which became ivy that snared the enemy.

"Tokomon, evolve! Patamon! Air Shot!" — A Digimon who looked like a hamster with large ears swelled his cheeks as much as he could and spat out a ball of air.

"Pukamon, evolve! Gomamon! Marching Fishes!" — Last of all, a Digimon who looked exactly like a seal cried out, calling a large number of different-colored fish that flew through the air from out of nowhere.

Faced with attack power that was incomparable to before, the stag beetle appeared to be taken aback. Whether it was having a hard time of it, or had simply given up, it spread its wings and fled.

"Wh—What just happened?"

Although relieved beyond measure, the children did not have a clue to what was going on. Koromon and the others had disappeared and in their place, seven unknown Digimon with bruises all over their bodies were gazing back at them.

"Koromon's dead!" Taichi wailed. The other children joined his cries.

But one of the newly arrived Digimon — the small cream-colored dinosaur who looked both friendly and fierce at the same time — giggled and smiled good-naturedly at Taichi and said this.

"I'm Koromon. Now that I've evolved though, I'm called Agumon."

That was the beginning of their adventures. In this manner — sharing laughter and tears, mutual encouragement, and momentary disputes along the way — the children and their Digimon set off on a long, long journey.

⑤ Where Are We?

It was the ocean. Taichi peered through the round lens of his mini-telescope as he gazed at the horizon where the marine blue of the sea and the azure blue of the sky melted together. The feel of the waves as they crested felt as lukewarm as a heated swimming pool, and the air smelled salty. Taichi put his mini-telescope not in his shorts like he always did, but in the pocket of his briefs. His shorts, blue T-shirt, and socks were drying on top of a rock along with the green, orange, and white shirts of the other boys.

Just then, Taichi's stomach complained.

"Hey, Jyou," he asked. "Don't you feel hungry?"

"No can do," Jyou scowled, purposefully putting a hand over the flap of the rectangular bag at his side. It was filled with the emergency food supply. "You've already eaten your share for the afternoon. Wait for when I distribute it again at night."

But it was not only Taichi who was hungry. Feeling his own empty stomach squirm, Yamato grumbled, "When is it going to get darker anyway?" and glared at Jyou as if it was his fault.

No one could really blame him: The flow of time here felt as if it was inching along. The position of the sun and the



shadows that the sun made didn't look as if they had even budged.

"I wonder what time it is now," Koushiro said forlornly. He had attempted to use his cell phone and laptop to investigate, but neither of them worked. And he'd thought he'd still had a lot of battery life left over...

"She mentioned it was... 35:00 AM, was it?" Taichi said with a wry smile. He'd suddenly remembered the minute they had arrived on the beach, when he had tried using one of the nearby telephone booths to call home. The person who picked up on the other end indicated the time as if it was an incredible joke. Too bad he didn't find it very funny.

○

"'Digimon.' I remember hearing that word before," Taichi revealed to Koushiro as he slid his newly dried T-shirt over his head. It felt crinkly and smelled faintly of salt.

"From where?"

"I forget, it was like something that caught my attention briefly as I was passing by. Someone did say it."

Taichi was often forgetful, but he remembered that it was Hikari who had said it. He was pretty sure that while they were watching a news report about abnormal weather, Hikari had said "Digimon." He just didn't want to reveal her just yet.

"Let me tell you about my personal hypothesis," Koushiro said, his back turned towards the others as he modestly put his dried shirt back on. "I think this place is perhaps a theme park that is being developed in absolute secrecy."

"I see," Taichi said.

"Its concept may be for us children to enjoy an adventure with these strange Digimon beings who live on this island."

Taichi confused the word "concept" with "consent" and made a strange face for an instant, but he decided not to interrupt.

"Perhaps you'd heard the word 'Digimon' because information about them had been leaked somewhere... the internet, for example."

"That makes sense." Taichi thought this was all very logical.

"This place is probably located in or near Okinawa. I mean, look at this climate and the blue sea," Koushiro said, motioning to their surroundings. "Either that, or we're on Hachijo Island."

"Doesn't matter which," Taichi shrugged. "They both still mean we're pretty far from the campgrounds."

"Yes."

"I wonder how we ended up getting here."

"The only explanation I can come up with is that we've been abducted."

"Abducted?"

"It means we've been kidnapped."

"Hey now..." Taichi said uneasily. He'd always watched television reports on kidnappings with a distant air, as his father was a normal salaryman with only a modest income. He'd never thought *he* would become a part of one!

"I did say that it was a kidnapping, but either our parents or the camp committee must have approved of this. If not, this is highly felonious."

"Felonious, huh?" Taichi couldn't help but secretly admire the range of Koushiro's vocabulary. This was the first time in his life Taichi himself had ever used the word "felonious."

Taichi quieted into thought. If what Koushiro said was true, then it wouldn't hurt to enjoy this adventure to the fullest. It was true that while they were attacked by the stag beetle monster he had almost peed himself to death from sheer terror, but when he thought about it now, it made his heart race with excitement. *If there are more thrills out there that are as electrifying as that, I'm going all out!*

○

Night still would not arrive.

The children took turns building up an unending chorus of "I'm hungry" and "Can we eat yet?" to which Jyou answered firmly, "No," every time. But even Jyou keenly felt the pangs of hunger in his own stomach.

The emergency food supply that Jyou was guarding was enough for three days. Jyou's group had six people, so 6

people x 3 days x 3 meals would equal 54 meals. They also added the snacks that were in Takeru's backpack and divided it for seven people. (The Digimon said that they didn't need the food, which was a big help.) According to their calculations, everything altogether would provide enough for four days worth.

Even so, it was not guaranteed that they would be able to get home within those days or even at all, so Jyou was determined to make the food last as long as possible.

"I won't hand it over." As the leader, Jyou accepted that he must act harsh and even at times, unbearable, for everyone's sakes.

Sora quietly went over to Jyou just then. "Hey, Jyou-san."

At this point, Jyou's high-wired nerves had begun to suspect that everyone was planning to steal the food supply from him, so Sora's casual and meaningless words made him feel like he was stepping on the edge of an open Venus flytrap. Naturally, he snapped at her. "What?!"

"About our food supply... could you at least give Yamato-kun's brother something? The rest of us will be okay."

"Huh?"

Jyou searched for the innocent-looking boy who stuck close to Yamato all the time.

In the shade of a cherry blossom tree that was in full bloom (What was a cherry blossom tree doing here, and growing in the middle of summer?), Takeru was leaning his head against the trunk, looking a little ill. Next to him sat, not his older brother Yamato but Mimi, who hated to get sunburned and came to cool herself. Of course, their newly evolved partners were with them. Everyone appeared to be worried about Takeru: Yamato was fanning him with a long wooden plank that he must have picked up from the beach.

Jyou thought about it. He, too, felt sorry for the younger boy... but it would be over for his leadership if he went back on what he'd already decided. Give them an opening and they'll soon be walking all over him. He just couldn't have that. Jyou was all too aware of his own often indecisive personality.

"No," Jyou said with a curt turn of his head.

Sora sighed. She thought perhaps of asking him to at least give Takeru his snacks back, but instead shut her mouth into a tight line and walked quietly back to where everyone was under the cherry blossoms.

When they heard what had transpired between her and Jyou, Yamato and the others glared coldly in Jyou's direction. What was this, a dictatorship?

Growing very uncomfortable under their accusing eyes, Jyou drew the bag of emergency food close to him and went to the seashore, in the area where the girls had previously been drying their clothes.

○

At the seashore, Jyou's partner Digimon who had changed both name and shape (he was now called Gomamon and he looked like a seal cub) was splashing the water happily, sending sprays of it everywhere.

"Hey, come join me, Jyou!"

But Jyou did not feel like answering Gomamon's invitation. He sat on top of a rock, keeping to his pensive thoughts.

If he had known things would turn out this way, he would have never come to camp. He should have done what his dad had told him to do and taken summer prep courses for his middle school exams. That would have been much more preferable anyway.

The more he stewed over it, the more bitterness he felt towards the bright sun with its uneven outline, towards the clear blue sky, towards the cheerfully spraying ocean, towards the fresh salty air, towards Gomamon, Sora, Yamato, Takeru, and the emergency food supply...

Standing up abruptly, he tore off his arm band and ripped it to pieces in frustration. Such a small act, but it did make him feel a little better.

Just then, on a darker part of the shore nearby, a hole the size of a miniature garden opened in the sand, gushing out a violent spray of water.

"Wh—What's that?!"

○

"Gyaaaaah!"

Jyou came rushing as fast as he could towards the group underneath the cherry blossom tree, a greatly agitated look on his pale features. The others simply stared at him.

"What could be wrong?" Mimi asked with worry, pulling on the strings of her ten-gallon hat.

"Who knows," Sora said coolly, remembering Jyou's attitude earlier.

But then, they all spotted the enormous pink monster charging open-mouthed behind Jyou, the tentacles on its head twitching like an erratic sea anemone as it dragged the spiral shell it carried on its back. Any ill feelings they had felt for Jyou immediately vanished.

"Jyou!" Yamato cried out as he rushed forward to help the older boy.

Meanwhile, Sora called for her team partner. "Taichi! Taichi!!"

Mimi could only stand there quaking, both hands covering her mouth.

While they waited for Taichi, their Digimon attacked.

"Marching Fishes!"

"Petit Fire!"

"Poison Ivy!"

"Air Shot!"

"Magical Fire!"

The Digimon began to attack resolutely, trying to stop the giant hermit crab's movements when Taichi and Koushiro arrived.

"What's going on?!" Taichi yelled.

"It's Shellmon!" Tentomon said, rushing forward to join the battle. Agumon did the same.

"Baby Flame!"

"Petit Thunder!"

But even with all seven attacking, it wasn't very effective against Shellmon's colossal size.

"Shuuuuuuuuu!" With a roar — a strange, almost fricative sound — Shellmon blasted out from its mouth a vicious spray of saltwater. The force of the water was not something to shrug at: Agumon and the others were swept away by the great hydraulic pressure.

"Agumon!" Before he even knew what he was doing, Taichi had rushed forward to Agumon's aid.

Koushiro cried out, "Taichi-san, don't!" but his voice didn't reach him.

"Shuuuuuuuuu!" Sitting on top of the fallen Digimon, Shellmon persistently continued spouting water at its surroundings. The telephone booths on the shore that were caught in its sweeping attack fell one after the other and were destroyed.

"Agumooon!"

Seeing Taichi running without even seeing the danger, Yamato yelled, "You idiot!" and chased after him.

Just then, whether purposely or on a whim, Shellmon rolled up the sand on the shore, tossing grains up in the air.

"Uwah!" Yamato yelped in surprise and stopped running. The sudden sandstorm blinded his vision. And then,

"Waaaaaaaah!" They heard Taichi scream. The sand settled to reveal him captured within Shellmon's grisly, glistening hand.

"Taichi!"

"Taichi-san!"

One after another, the children cried out Taichi's name.

"Taichi!" Agumon also shouted from beneath Shellmon's stomach. But no matter how hard he tried to twist himself free, he couldn't crawl out from there.

"U—Urrgh..."

Shellmon brought the hand holding Taichi up to its head. Its eerie, yellow tentacles wriggled below Taichi's feet. *Is there a mouth inside those tentacles that'll suck up all my fluids and digest me?* Taichi thought, breaking into a cold sweat.

"Taichi! Taichi!" Agumon continued to cry as he struggled. Tears of frustration were streaming down his face. *I have to protect Taichi but I can't! If only Taichi wished it, if only he wished for me to become stronger...!*

Several of the tentacles reached up, entwining themselves until they touched Taichi's knees.

Taichi lost all hope.

"Am I... going to die?" he whispered to himself. His instincts vehemently refused to accept that.

"No... I don't want to die... Help me... Help me, Agumon!!!"

Taichi's blue device immediately glowed. Its gauge ascended until it broke past the critical point. Rising to a level high up that could not be physically seen in the Digital World, it became a dazzling light when it reached its summit, exploding into what appeared at a glance to look like a bulky, disordered mass of information. This flow of information was at a scale that could rival the galaxy, and pieces of it that reacted to the light were selected.

[[G R E Y M O N]]

Each of the small fragments of information glowed as they gathered together and flowed towards a specific point. The tumbling sequence of light became a helix, which rained down invisibly on the data that would equip Agumon. The information describing his form was rewritten in a flash, and it even called in for greater mass until, with a blaze of light that looked like flames, he transformed.

"Agumon, evolve! Greymon!"

He succeeded in another evolution. The last time, he had evolved to save his fellow Digimon friends from danger, but now it was solely to protect the children's lives.

The Greymon that appeared along with white light had a giant body that was not to be outdone by Shellmon. He looked fierce, like a true dinosaur: A massive, orange-skinned dinosaur.

Greymon used his three-fingered claws to grab at Shellmon's wrist, the one whose hand held Taichi captive, and thrust the horn that protruded from the headpiece he wore across half of his face into Shellmon's neck.

"Shuuuuuuuuuuu!" Its cries this time were not those of wicked triumph but shrieks of pain. While Shellmon writhed about, Greymon saved Taichi from Shellmon's grip.

"Th—Thanks," Taichi said to Greymon.

Greymon growled low in his throat and faced Shellmon, scorching the clump of tentacles on its head that had frightened Taichi with a blistering ball of fire at point-blank range.

"Shuuuuuuuuuuu!!"

A nauseating stench arose from the smoldering tentacles and Taichi reflexively covered both his mouth and nose. Before Greymon could attempt to expel more fire, Shellmon fled speedily, for all its bulk, into the sea. It disappeared into the safety of the waters' depths as it raged at them wordlessly with the useless threats of a loser.

Yamato and the others, who had been watching from a distance, put their hands up to their hearts and sighed in relief, when Mimi saw something above her and whispered, "What could that be?"

Sora followed her gaze. A black object that looked like a rotating flying saucer was whizzing from their right to their left as it retreated from the coastline.

"Oh, it's a UFO," Mimi said, nodding to herself.

But Sora didn't think so. The object had been round, but also spiky. It looked more to her like a gear.

FOOTNOTES

[01] 御神渓谷

Mikami Keikoku (translated as Mikami Canyon) is where the Chosen Children's campgrounds are located.

[02] “お台場の秋田”

“Akita of Odaiba” is a reference to Akita Yutaka, a soccer player who was declared one of the best defenders of his generation. According to this novel's timeline, this phrase should pertain to Akita's participation in the 1998 World Cup. [[Wikipedia](#)]

[03] 祠

Hokora are small wooden shrines, and their presence in this novel is fitting because the kanji that make up “Mikami” in Mikami Canyon means “God”. They are apparently located several feet away from the campgrounds the children are meant to stay in. Don't mistake them for cabins; school camping trips will normally use tents for students to sleep in. [[picture](#)]



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[04] 弁当

Bentō boxes are Japanese lunch boxes (either made of lacquer or plastic) that are filled with a single meal. These boxes, usually in ones filled with sushi, will sometimes have decorative plastic grass in them to give an aesthetic charm. [[Wikipedia](#)][[picture](#)]

[05] 関西弁

Although it will not be translated in a special way here, all of Tentomon's forms speak in Kansai-ben. This is a type of Japanese dialect predominant in the Kansai area (mostly Osaka, Kobe, Kyoto), and is very different from the "standard" Japanese. To see a list of how people in Kansai would speak differently from people in Tokyo, you can view [this wordlist](#) by Nihongo Resources. The only thing that will be kept faithful is Tentomon's usage of "-han" which is the equivalent to "-san" (a polite add-on to someone's name; usually this person will be a stranger or of higher rank than the speaker).

[06] 蚊取り豚

Katoributa is a pig-like object with a spiral-shaped incense hooked inside it. As the incense burns, smoke puffs out from the large opening where its nose is. This is a very functional and appealing method (it's cute!) of repelling mosquitoes during the summer. [[picture](#)]

[07] コロコロ

"Korokoro" is the origin of Koromon's name. It is a Japanese sfx for something small and round, that rolls.

[08] 後輩

For work colleagues or members in the same school club, those who are older with more experience are called "senpai" (seniors) while those who are younger are called "kouhai" (juniors).

[09] ムゲンマウンテン

Mugen Mountain (translated as Infinity Mountain)

[10] クワガタ怪獣

Kuwagamon is a fusion of the words 'Kuwagata' and 'Monster.' Kuwagata means 'stag beetle' in Japanese.

[novel] digimon adventure: chapter 2

 web.archive.org/web/20100724023839/http://digitalscratch.wordpress.com/2010/03/23/novel-digimon-adventure-chapter-2-2/

小説 デジモンアドベンチャー〈1〉 いま、冒険がはじまる

Chapter 2; File Island

① Black Gears

The only certain thing he knew was that they were not in an amusement park. It was now almost a week since they had arrived in this strange place and they had traveled for miles without finding an exit. If this expansive area really was a theme park, Koushiro was sure that he would have at least heard about it on the news.

Besides, Koushiro thought, as he looked at Tentomon flying besides him. To think that creatures like this live here.....

Feeling Koushiro's gaze, Tentomon looked back at him curiously with his green stare. "What's the matter, Koushiro-han? Is there something on my face?"

"Ah, no, it's nothing."

A large ladybug that he could wrap his arms around. Not only that, but Tentomon spoke in Kansai dialect and he could change into a larger being just like how Agumon became Greymon. How could these beings do that, and what prompted them to come into existence in the first place?

These past few days, the children had done nothing but wander around in earnest, searching for a way to escape this place and return home. Yet instead of finding other humans besides them, they encountered a large number of diverse beings who were all classified as "Digimon." There was one who looked like a dragon, another like a robot, another like a stuffed teddy bear that was two-stories high, and then another who looked like a fireball shaped like a man. Each time danger befell the children, the Digimon they had with them would undergo "evolution" and they would all make it through somehow. Even Koushiro's Tentomon "evolved," becoming a rhinoceros beetle [11] the size of a small truck.

However, perhaps because maintaining that form used up a lot of energy, Tentomon returned to his former size after his battles. For reasons that could not be explained, Tentomon would not degenerate further into his smaller form, Motimon. This held true for the rest of their Digimon.

The only ones among the seven Digimon who had yet to show them their evolved forms was the eldest boy Jyou's Digimon, Gomamon, and the youngest boy Takeru's Digimon, Patamon.

"I wonder why it's called 'evolution,'" Koushiro mused, voicing his thoughts to Tentomon this time. "I mean, evolution normally consists of an entire species changing slowly over a long period of time. The changes that you and your friends undergo are more like a transformation. You each transform into something too enormous to be an evolution."

"Well, I don't know the answer to that myself," Tentomon replied. "I can't give an explanation, but all I'm aware of is that it isn't a transformation but evolution."

As they walked, Koushiro asked Tentomon many things about this region and about Digimon. While doing so, he couldn't help but feel a slight self-derision snorting at him in the back of his mind. Never before had he talked so much to a stranger, even if that stranger wasn't a human being.

In the days before he had left for camp, he normally avoided taking the initiative to talk to others in school. He didn't like getting involved with them.

Especially not when he didn't even know who in the world *he* was.

As a matter of course, his classmates rarely had a chance to talk with him. Many thought that he was hard to get

along with, and Koushiro personally didn't find that inconvenient so he did nothing to persuade them otherwise.

Taichi Yagami was one of the few exceptions. Because their school curriculum had a physical education requirement, Koushiro was forced to choose a club. It was a mere coincidence that he chose the soccer club. He wouldn't have to face people one-on-one if he was in a club emphasizing teamwork rather than individual achievement, and the positions in soccer appeared more vague than they were in baseball. He felt that in the soccer club, he wouldn't have to go out of his way to engage with other people.

Taichi was an upperclassman in that soccer club. It wasn't that he was extremely talkative, but Taichi treated everyone without discrimination, as equals. That attitude of his didn't change, even towards Koushiro.

If Taichi hadn't invited him, Koushiro was sure that he would have never gone to summer camp.

○

They walked while keeping the steep tower of a mountain the Digimon called "Infinity Mountain" on their right and the ocean on their left. The direction of the sun had changed during their journey, so they knew they had been circling the island: That is, if this place really was an island. If they assumed that the sun rose from the east, than they should be at the northernmost part of the island right now. As if the land wanted to give physical proof, the temperature had dropped greatly and they came to an area covered in snow. They had only walked several days from the beach, which they had believed was on the south coast, to reach a snowfield. Did such an area ever exist on Earth?

Because the children wore summer clothes for camp, they grew easily numb in the cold. The warmer clothes they had meant to wear at night were left in their bookbags back at camp.

Only Mimi and Takeru, because they wore slightly thicker clothes, rejoiced as they played within the snow. The plant Digimon, Palmon (who was as big as a baby and could walk on two legs) as well as Patamon (a hamster the size of a cat, with large ears that flapped like wings but made him move slower than if he was walking) were with them. Palmon was Mimi's Digimon, while Patamon was Takeru's, and their personalities with their humans was very similar. In other words, both of them were like children without a thread of apprehension in them about their situation.

"I'm hungry," Mimi commented a little while after playing, to which Jyou replied irritably, "Instead of saying that all the time, why don't you try looking for food on your own first!"

The emergency food supply that Jyou was carrying had been eaten up long ago. Immediately after the incident with Shellmon had occurred, all of the food had been used up to nourish everyone.

For better or for worse, this island (although Jyou would not accept that it was just yet) was filled with things that could be eaten. Even though it was hard to believe that they were being supplied with electricity, they found vending machines that actually worked, a storehouse inside an uninhabited cabin that was filled with food, wild plants, and a bunch of other things they didn't know about but were edible.

The Digimon were very familiar with this kind of food and the children never had trouble having things to eat and drink every day. Of course, if they didn't have their Digimon's knowledge, they wouldn't have learned of this so easily. Jyou couldn't exactly remember what he had gleaned from reading all of those young adult books on island survival, so he was secretly grateful to the Digimon for their help. But now...

"What is wrong with you people, anyway?" he continued. "Don't you realize the situation that we're in right now?! We have to find the adults quickly and get them to help us out of this place, we have to find somewhere to sleep for tonight, and since we can't just lie down in a cold place like this, we have to start a fire before the sun goes down! There are so many things we have to do, yet all you do is complain!"

Oh no, I've said too much. Before Jyou's conscience had time to catch up with his mouth and throttle it for being so harsh, Mimi began to cry.

"But, but, but...!" she wailed.



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Mimi continued to sob until they heard Sora shout that she had found food. It took the breath out of Sora's lungs, to raise her voice loud enough to be heard over Mimi's cries.

The anticipation of food warming their stomachs — or to be more exact, the stuff Sora had found inside a refrigerator that she *thought* was food — in this cold district pleased everyone greatly. With bright faces, they all gathered around the refrigerator. Jyou was the only one who arrived slower than the rest.

Even during dinner, Jyou kept silent.

○

Bright sunlight shone through the opening of the cave they had slept in, showing that a new day had arrived. The snow that was piled up outside made things appear brighter than normal. As the seven children had burrowed deep inside the cave last night to huddle together from the cold, it didn't take long before they realized that two of their comrades were missing.

Both Jyou and Gomamon were gone.

Everyone's eyes shot open at once. It was Sora who found the letter placed near the opening of the cave. A rock had been placed on top of it so the wind wouldn't blow it away.

[(I'm climbing up the mountain to see for sure whether or not this place is an island. Please stay here and wait for me.)]

Infinity Mountain towered before their eyes from the snow field they were in now. Because it looked like a steep tower, it had appeared drastically tall, but now that they were closer to it, they could see that it wasn't as high as they'd originally imagined. Even so, that didn't mean it was an easy mountain for Jyou and his small Digimon, who was yet unable to evolve, to climb successfully.

"He must have felt terrible about what happened last night, all this time," Sora whispered.

"Whether he heard her or not, Taichi said, "Anyway, it's dangerous to be up there alone. Let's go help him. With Sora's Digimon, me and Agumon can get there quick. You guys can catch up later."

His decisions came with lightning-speed in times like this. Taichi usually acted without giving a more detailed explanation, but his reasoning was sound.

"Piyomon, evolve! Birdramon!" Sora's pink-colored bird Digimon, Piyomon, always acted like a pampered child, but now she changed shape into a large and fierce fire bird Digimon.

Just as one would expect from the flames wrapped around her body, the temperature there was too high for anyone to climb up on, but Taichi, Agumon, and Sora could dangle from her two clawed feet. This was the only part of Birdramon that was like an ordinary bird.

Hanging, with Agumon, onto one of Birdramon's legs as if he were riding a ski lift, Taichi looked behind him and yelled, "Well, Yamato, I'm counting on you to take care of them!"

"Got it! Leave it to me!" was how the blond responded, but when Yamato looked behind him, he couldn't help but let out a little sigh. There was his little brother, the fourth grade boy who hardly talked and was followed by a ladybug that spoke in Kansai dialect, and the boy's female classmate who spoke aloud everything she was thinking.

Infinity Mountain loomed above their sights.

○

But in reality, the mountain incorporated a long, well-worn road all the way up to its apex, and it wasn't impossible for even an elementary school grader to climb it. Gomamon jumped steadily alongside Jyou. His white body was exactly like that of a seal, including his flippers, so his form didn't appear as if it was well-suited for this rocky environment. However, he made no sound of a complaint as he climbed. In fact, he kept up making saucy comments like:

"Jyou! I'm leaving you behind if you don't hurry up!"

"You're one to talk. I'll leave *you* behind if you slow down," Jyou shot back, while silently thinking that he had never spoken so impudently like this towards friends in his classes and in cram school. "Anyway, it's great that it's started to get warmer ever since we started climbing this mountain."

"I'm strong enough to tough this out even *with* the cold, though."

The pair kept poking at each other all throughout their climb. Jyou didn't know it at this time, but the one thing that

distracted him from feeling discouraged at climbing an unfamiliar mountain all on his own was Gomamon's constant chatter.

A part of the mountainside split open without a sound.

The inside of it was like a cave but because no light spilled into it, one could not tell how deep it was. The only thing one could see was a darkness that appeared to be saturated with evil intent.

Something black came rushing out from inside, and the split closed silently once more. The seam could not be seen anywhere.

○

Gomamon noticed them first. "Hey, look."

"Black gears..." Without a second thought, Jyou pulled Gomamon to him and hid. Many of the Digimon who had attacked them in the past few days all had a black gear stuck somewhere within their bodies. The black gears made them lose their sanity and become violent. To remove them from the Digimon's body, the gears needed to be attacked with a considerable amount of power before they were destroyed.

None of the children knew where the black gears had come from and what their purpose was, but now Jyou said, "They flew over from this mountain..."

He looked at Gomamon.

"I'm not stupid enough to wait for one of those things to stick me," Gomamon said, answering the unspoken worry that Jyou felt. He turned. "Well, let's go, Jyou! There's still a long way ahead of us."

A gear pierced through clouds as it flew at mid-height of the mountain. With a sharp turn, it punctured the back of a Digimon who was in the middle of descending from the skies — so hard that half of it stuck out from the Digimon's body.

The black gears may not be made completely from some solid substance. The Digimon's back gave no indication of a wound or even a spurt of blood. The only thing that changed was that the Digimon's eyes (although one could only see glass because it was wearing something similar to a welding helmet) glowed with a strange light that looked very evil.

No matter how worn the mountain path was, it was still very steep. However, not even Mimi gave a peep of complaint — there was no mistake that all of them were thinking about Jyou. Each of them was aware that they were the ones who had pushed him so far that he felt obliged to make the climb on his own.

Yamato and the others somehow made it halfway up when they spotted Taichi and the others, along with Jyou, already engaged in battle.

"Look over there! Birdramon's about to fall!" Takeru, who was ahead of them, screamed.

"Greymon is there too. Ah, he's trying to attack that Digimon who looks like a horse!" Koushiro said, pointing to a Digimon flying in the sky.

Among the gaps in the trees, they could see Greymon aim a ball of fire in the air above him. But the narrow mountain path was not wide enough for him to gain a foothold and support his large build.

The Digimon they believed to be the enemy was a flying white horse. Flapping its wings broadly, it rapidly changed course in mid-air and shot out white light from its mouth.

Greymon lost his balance and fell.

"Greymon!" Yamato cried out.

As Greymon scrambled, he landed in a lower place that was much wider than before. It was there that they saw the fiery wings of Birdramon. Glowing, she became smaller and returned to Piyomon. She must have exhausted a colossal amount of energy to reach the mountain.

Taichi chased after Greymon by sliding down the slope. Yamato and the others couldn't see her, but Sora must have been there as well. The flying horse Digimon began to aim more of its attacks in that direction.

"Gabumon, let's go!" Yamato called out to his Digimon. When evolved, Gabumon had enormous fighting strength but — at this, Yamato hesitated — he couldn't fly. It wasn't certain whether or not they would make it in time, and there wasn't a chance he could leave Takeru and the others alone.

"We'll go ahead," Koushiro said to Tentomon. When Tentomon evolved, he could easily fly there with Koushiro riding on his head.

But there was still one problem. If Takeru was to be taken along with Yamato's Digimon, Koushiro would have to bring Mimi and Palmon. This addition would greatly reduce Kabuterimon's offensive ability. After all, that flying horse moved at a very slick speed. Kabuterimon wouldn't be able to deal with it effectively if too many people were balanced on his head.

Even so, they could not leave Mimi alone: That was obviously quite dangerous. Deliberating over what to do and unable to come up with a decision, Yamato and Koushiro looked at each other.

Mimi, who had been staring in blank amazement above her now raised her voice. "Ah! There's Jyou—senpai!"

Snapping their heads up, both Yamato and Koushiro saw Jyou jump off the cliff. He had aimed himself at the back of the flying horse Digimon.

"That's too reckless!"

Only narrowly did Jyou make it. He was grabbing tightly onto something on that Digimon's back.

"He's trying to take out the black gear!"

"No! Look out!" Mimi cried. Unable to withstand as the flying horse twisted its body to buck him off, Jyou was thrown towards the skies.

Now Gomamon leapt off the cliff. Light shot out from somewhere that the children couldn't see, and when it reached Gomamon, the light radiated from inside him and he changed into a bigger shape.

"Gomamon, evolve! Ikkakumon!" He became a Digimon that was as big as Greymon, his entire body covered with long white hairs. Ikkakumon braced himself on a ledge that was slightly higher up than where Greymon was. Jyou landed with a soft bounce on his back.

"Ah! He shot out a horn!"

Yamato and the others were just as surprised as Takeru. The horn propelled through the air like a rocket, a fizzling fire burning at the end of its tail. The flying horse dodged it, but the horn that looked as if it was about to fall towards the ground, threw off its shell to reveal the real missile inside. This missile was what had been spouting the fire and it changed direction to aim directly at the horse's back. Advancing swiftly, as if it were being pulled towards its mark, it exploded into the flying horse's back. From within the beam of light that followed, the silhouette of a black gear floated upwards and was pulverized.

"He did it! Jyou-san's Digimon is so cool!"

As Takeru and the others rejoiced, they turned their gazes back to Jyou to find a new horn had regrown on top of Ikkakumon's head. They couldn't see Jyou's expression, being so far away, but they were sure that he, too, was wearing a joyous look on his face.

○

But by the time the children met up again, Jyou was looking more depressed than they had ever seen him before. When Yamato's group had finally rejoined the others at the summit, Jyou was on his knees in the dirt.

"This place really was an island! No matter where we walk, we can't escape from here!"

The mountain peak was as wide as a gymnasium and they could see all of their surroundings from there: What they'd walked through as well as the opposite side of the mountain. No matter where they turned, the sea stretched endlessly towards the horizon. They could not find any continents or other lands out there.

Suddenly they wished they had accepted what the Digimon had said earlier on the spot. It would have made things easier. Would they have to continue living the rest of their lives on this island, or should they continue hoping for help to reach them? And even so, for how long would they have to wait?

"Anyway, we should climb down. There's no way we can sleep here for the night," Taichi said as he peered below him with his only possession, a mini-telescope. "Ah! There's a house! It looks pretty big."

Jyou jerked his head up in surprise, but immediately wondered if Taichi only made that up so he could get

everyone moving.

"Oh, you don't trust me, do you? I'm telling the truth. There, look." The minute Taichi lifted the mini-telescope from his eye, he couldn't find where the house was again.

"That's okay," Jyou said unenthusiastically. "You don't have to make up something so transparent so it'll give us useless hope..."

He showed no signs of standing up. Both Takeru and Mimi hadn't recovered from their climb up the mountain either. Agumon, Gomamon, and Piyomon were eating to refresh themselves after their battle.

If things had kept up that way, it would have taken a long time before they began to make their way down the mountain. Luckily or unluckily for them, they would not be staying there for long.

"Gwehehehehe!"

A green demon appeared from the path that Yamato and the others had used to climb up. His face was twice as large as a Namahage mask [12], but just as savage. If they hadn't seen his mouth move and speak viciously at them, the children might have thought that he was an ordinary adult wearing a mask.

"I've finally caught up with ya. You're all dead!"

The entire upper half of the demon's body was green. His muscular shoulders seemed as big as small hills, while the length of the arms that stretched from them were as big as a human's. When he made a fist, it looked five times bigger. In his right hand was gripped a large club that looked as if it was made from bone. With one twirl of that club, the stone next to him smashed into sand particles.

The sound it created was like an explosion. Hearing that sound, the children began to move for the first time.

"Run!"

They didn't know what sort of guy the demon was, but they knew beyond a doubt that he was after them. Heading towards the opposite end of the summit, Sora shouted, "There's a path over here!"

Under her guidance, they all ran down the road she had pointed out as if they were trying to roll towards the bottom. After making sure that the slowest of the group, Mimi, Takeru and Jyou had gone ahead of him, Yamato brought up the rear. The demon was ambling calmly after them, but they couldn't predict how fast he could be once he began to run.

"Gabumon, you can evolve anytime, right?!"

"Yeah! Whenever you want!"

After running for only a little while, they saw Sora and the others had stopped ahead of them.

Another human-shaped figure was blocking their path. It wasn't green this time, although it did have a body covered with many scars that looked far sturdier than the green demon. What's more, it couldn't have been a human after all, because from the neck up was the head of a lion.

"It's Leomon!" Seeing Takeru's worried look beside him, Patamon fluttered his ears as he said comfortingly, "Don't worry, Leomon is a Digimon of justice!"

"He's really strong, but he's a good Digimon," Piyomon added.

So he wasn't a human but a Digimon. What's more, a good Digimon. Sora and the others smiled with relief...

That is, until Leomon laid a hand on the sword wrapped around his waist and said, "Chosen Children..... Die."

The words were spoken in a low, withered voice, but Sora could hear him plainly. Pulling out his sword with an underhand grip, Leomon made a wide stance.

They didn't know what or who the "Chosen Children" were, but the sole thing they realized was that this Digimon was also planning to kill them just like the green demon.

Speaking of which, the green demon was closing in on them from behind. There was no way to escape from the mountain. The sound of the club hitting rock again and a coarse laugh could be heard behind them, while the Leomon in front began to advance towards them. Leomon's sword gave off a dull glint. His pace was surprisingly slow.

"Agumon, evolve now!" Spurred by Taichi's voice, all of the Digimon evolved simultaneously.

"Agumon, evolve! Greymon!"

"Piyomon, evolve! Birdramon!"

"Palmon, evolve! Togemon!"

Before Leomon stood Greymon, while the fire bird, Birdramon, hovered in the skies above them. Next to Greymon

was a cactus with arms and legs readying herself into a fighting stance. It was the evolved form of Mimi's Palmon, Togemon.

"Gabumon, evolve! Garurumon!"

"Tentomon, evolve! Kabuterimon!"

"Gomamon, evolve! Ikkakumon!"

Facing the green demon was Ikkakumon, who had just evolved, waving his horn in his opponent's face. Next to him was an enormous blue wolf that Yamato's Gabumon evolved into, Garurumon. Buzzing above them was the large rhinoceros beetle that Tentomon evolved into, Kabuterimon.

With the odds of six against two, even Leomon and the green demon stopped walking. Each of the children's Digimon was larger than the size of a human. Even the smallest of them all, Togemon, was twice as large as Leomon.

Greymon moved first to attack. Just when he was about to open his mouth to blast out a fireball, the sound of an explosion was heard above their heads. The rock near the summit started to crumble. If nothing was done, Taichi and the others would be dragged into the rockslide that they wouldn't be able to escape from.

Greymon shot out fire, while Garurumon let fly a long spray of pale flames from his mouth. Birdramon spread her wings grandly, shooting out a number of smaller fireballs. Ikkakumon released a consecutive stream of explosive horns, while Kabuterimon formed a ball of strong electricity with his set of three legs before shooting it out. The rocks close to falling on them dissolved into fine pieces. One large piece that had escaped the barrage of attacks and was heading towards the children was deftly flown to bits with one rapid punch by Togemon. She was wearing bright red boxing gloves on her hands.

All of the rocks had turned to sand, which rained incessantly on them. By the time it stopped and the children finally raised their heads, both Leomon and the green demon had disappeared from the mountain trail.

"Are they... gone?" Jyou asked as he repositioned his glasses up his nose.

② The Deceptive Mansion

Night was approaching by the time they reached the foot of the mountain. Everyone thought they were lucky that Taichi had discovered the house within the forest. All of the children were bone-tired and even their Digimon, who never appeared to run out of energy (as long as there was enough food), seemed to be drooping on their feet after their evolutions.

When they arrived at the house, they found that it would be more appropriate to call it a mansion or a small castle: It was a brick, European-styled house that was three-stories high and would not have looked out of place in a movie. From their vantage point below, even the windows on the attic floor looked as though they had rooms.

Opening the heavy front door, they stepped into a large hallway lit brightly by a magnificent chandelier. That much was expected, but what caught them off-guard and made them rush restlessly to the dining hall was the smell of delicious food that floated towards them. After eating half-cooked barbecue and washed fruits day in and day out on the island, the freshly cooked food made their eyes widen. It was filled with platters that certainly "would not have looked out of place in a movie."

There was even a bathroom that was slightly open-air and filled with gushing, warm bathwater. This public bathhouse was the only place that was so ill-fitted for the surrounding Western architecture that Koushiro's thoughts returned once more to his theme park theory.

What was most baffling was that, despite all of the preparations that must have gone into this warm reception, not a single human figure was in sight.

However, the children did not have the time to be bothered about that. After filling their stomachs with food that actually looked like the food they were used to, they jumped into the baths to wash out the grime and sand that clung to the roots of their hair.

There were eight beds total in the large room on the third floor. The sheets were soft and clean, as if they had just been washed, and the beds were big enough for even an average adult to fit in them that each child and their respective Digimon climbed in together to sleep.

It was the first time since the seven children had arrived on this island that they had ever felt this comfortably satisfied. For a while after they burrowed under the covers, their cheerful conversations continued.

"I wonder how Mama and Papa are doing."

On Mimi's words, everyone's anxiety returned.

"It's been a week, hasn't it? Since we've come here," Taichi whispered.

"I wonder if they really know we're here," Sora said, as if wanting reconfirmation for what Koushiro had speculated earlier.

"Well, we can't be sure of that," Koushiro said. "After all, this place is..."

Yamato made a loud noise as he dove under his blankets, cutting off Koushiro's words. "Even if we talk about this now, we won't solve anything. We can speculate it to exhaustion and we still won't be able to figure out how our parents are doing, or where we are. Instead of worrying about that, we should sleep so we can be well-rested for tomorrow."

"Yeah, I agree," Jyou said as he took off his glasses and placed them on his bedside. Not even Gomamon, or the other Digimon who had been laughing joyfully with them only moments before, could break the heavy silence.

"Mama..."

Everyone heard Takeru murmur into his pillow. He might even be crying. That one word shut everyone's mouths and they quietly pulled the covers over them.

Taichi realized something. Yamato knew that Takeru would become sad once they started talking about their parents, so he made everyone put a lid on it before they went any further.

As Taichi looked at the two blonds sleeping in separate beds next to him, he thought back to when they had arrived at the campgrounds. At first, he hadn't known that these two were brothers. For as long as he'd known him, Taichi had always believed that Yamato was an only child. It was only after they had come to this island that he found out the younger boy unknown to him was Yamato's brother.

It was even later when he learned that their parents had divorced and separated the two to live in different areas. Right after Yamato had told him that, Takeru had been attacked by a dragon Digimon and Yamato risked his life to save him (acting far more recklessly than anyone would have expected of him normally), ending up being the one in danger instead. That was when Gabumon, sleeping next to Yamato now (when he curled up like that, he looked like Agumon wearing a fur pellet), transformed, I mean, evolved into a large wolf and...

Wait a minute. I think I once asked someone if Yamato had siblings, but they dodged the question. Was it Sora?

As he pondered in his thoughts, Taichi felt his eyelids droop heavily as he felt more and more sleepy. He could feel himself about to fade out when he was jolted awake by a voice.

"Taichi..." Agumon whispered to him. "I have to go to the bathroom."

○

They had to walk down the stairs to get to the bathrooms on the second floor.

Taichi waited impatiently for Agumon to finish his business as he stood in the corridor outside connecting to a large hallway. It was strange that the only bathrooms were located here in this grand building, but Taichi was far more concerned about other things at the moment.

"Geez, at least go to the bathroom by yourself," Taichi grumbled, and he looked down the hallway.

A large moon was glittering outside, its moonlight falling through the windows and landing on a painting that hung on the end of the hallway.

"Huh?"

Taichi noticed that something about it was different from when they'd first arrived here in the early evening.

"Isn't there supposed to be a picture of an angel there?"

Within the large frame that was bathed in pale light, there had been a painting of an angel kneeling before something while offering up a prayer. He remembered Takeru and Patamon, who had spotted it first, exclaiming that it was a pretty picture and gazing at it for a long time. But now that painting was...

"It's pitch-black."

Nothing was drawn inside the framed canvas. Although light was gleaming on it, it was the darkest black as if a



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giant hand had reached in and scooped out a neat, rectangular hole.

He tried leaning over the corridor railing to get a better look but pulled back quickly in alarm. The railing had made a nasty creak under his weight, even though it was made of thick wood and looked stout. Why would it creak as if...?

But no, even now the railing was crumbling as though it were rotten.

His eyes grown accustomed to the dark, Taichi looked around to find that everything in the mansion was decaying. When the orange light of the evening sun had shone on it earlier, everything had seemed to glow... but now the entire place was covered in thick dust. He could even see the footprints they had left behind in the afternoon. It was as if hundreds of years had passed ever since they had entered the bedroom.

"This is....."

They'd seen plenty of weird things ever since they had come to this island, but never something like this.

It was then that a voice echoed from somewhere within the dark mansion.

"It seems you've noticed."

The voice sounded as if it was coming from far away, yet at the same time, Taichi felt it being whispered into his ear. Within its quiet depths, he could feel only evil seeping. If darkness had a voice, it would surely have a voice like this.

"If you had slept quietly, you would have died without knowing a thing."

"Who's there?!" Taichi cried out.

The darkness gave no answer. Instead, he heard Agumon's voice from inside the bathroom.

"Taichi!"

There was the sound of a heavy blow that echoed in the hallway. Agumon had hit open the thick door with a dull thud, his body flying out into the corridor. From inside, Taichi could see the shadow of a large manshape.

"Gweheheheh!" It was the green demon they had met on Infinity Mountain. Giving his club a light twirl, he smashed the heavy bathroom door to pieces.

"Agumon!" Taichi drew Agumon close. Did his small body get beaten by that club?

"Evolve, Agumon!" He held out his Digivice, but it gave no reaction.

"Taichi, I can't..... I don't feel any strength."

The green demon was now standing right before his eyes. Taichi had no idea what was going on, but he made a swift decision: He had to go back to his friends. Carrying Agumon in his arms, he turned to run but immediately stopped. Below the steps to the third floor stood a solid and unflinching shadow. It was Leomon.

"The Chosen Children must die."

Leomon drew out his sword. Taichi and Agumon were cut off from both sides in the corridor.

"Why can't you evolve, Agumon?!"

"Nothing came out when I went to the toilet — it's really strange — like I'd never eaten anything..."

"But you ate so much!"

That voice from within the darkness spoke again. "Everything was an illusion..... I'd planned to at least put you to sleep before killing you off."

It sounded as if it was coming from the opposite end of the other corridor connecting to the hallway. Just as Taichi turned his eyes to take a sharper look inside the depths of the dark hall, the darkness said,

"This dream is over."

Even as the voice spoke, the roof, the walls, and the floor of the mansion shattered to pieces. Taichi could see the night sky, the forest, and Infinity Mountain all around him. The mansion that had once looked so resplendent now looked as if it had been destroyed more than hundreds of years ago. Not one part of it was left in mint condition. Taichi was standing in the ruins of the corridor.

It wasn't long before Taichi realized that his stomach was grumbling and his body felt rough with dirt. The food and baths must have been an illusion just like the mansion.

It was no wonder that Agumon couldn't evolve then. He didn't have enough energy.

The corridor where the voice of darkness had come from only had most of the railing left hovering at a dangerous balance. With the moonlit forest in the background, a human-shaped shadow stood above that railing.

"Who are you?!" Taichi glared. The shadow looked as if it was turning everything black. What made it clear that the shadow was not a human were the extremely long arms that were folded in front of him and the bat-like wings that sprouted on his back.

His mouth opening from underneath his black mask, he said, "My name is Devimon. One who is entrusted with fulfilling the mission of the Darkness."

Slowly, he unfolded his long arms and spread them upwards. Taichi could hear screams coming from the bedroom. With a gasp, he turned to see beds flying above him in the air.

Yamato and the others woke up to an odd sound that they had never heard before. When they realized that it was the sound of the mansion's roof and walls disappearing, the starry sky above them was already widening into sight before their very eyes. When they tried to get off the beds, they saw that even the floor was full of holes. A wrong step and they might break through the floor and fall down from three stories high.

As they wondered over what to do, this time, their beds suddenly rose in the air. As they fastened themselves to the bedposts, the beds tilted diagonally and moved at odd angles. It was as if they were riding a jet coaster without seat belts and it took all of their might to prevent themselves from being shaken off.

"Takeru!" Yamato shouted as he tried to identify from the wild dance of beds which one belonged to his brother. Takeru was clinging onto his bed with all his might.

"I'm okay, Brother!"

Even Patamon, with the ability to fly, appeared to be helpless against the bed's speed: He was also hanging on for dear life.

"Why can't you evolve?" They heard Sora shout.

Below, they could see the remains of the mansion where they had been sleeping peacefully only minutes before. In one part of the corridor was the green demon, Leomon, and an unknown black demon, all of them surrounding Taichi and Agumon. Leomon was approaching Taichi with his sword held up over his head.

There was nothing the other children could do for them.

"Taichi!"

Just when it appeared as if Taichi would be cut to pieces, something changed. Yamato saw a dazzling light suddenly pierce the darkness, but he couldn't tell that it was coming from the blue device in Taichi's hand.

The next change that occurred was what stirred in Leomon when the light reached him. The hand holding his sword stopping in mid-swing, he began to shake his head back and forth as if he was trying to shake something off. Something black began to rip out of his back.

"It's a gear! It's just like I thought, Leomon is being controlled by a black gear!" Gabumon yelled. Yamato still couldn't believe that something as simple as that had brought Leomon back to normal, but when the light stopped, Leomon faced the black shadow that looked like a demon.

Drawing his right hand, which did not hold the sword, towards him into a fighting posture, Leomon punched the air before him with a loud yell. From his fist flew out a mass of scorching hot air shaped like a lion's head, which surged towards the demonic shadow with a ferocious roar.

The demon spread his wings and flew into the air to avoid it. The railing he had been standing on disintegrated along with the corridor it had been connected to.

The flying beds abruptly straightened as if someone's control had been lost over them, and they began to move smoothly through the air. All eight beds separated into different directions. Takeru's bed flew further and further out of Yamato's sight.

One of the two empty beds made a sudden nose dive as if it had lost its sense of destination. From the corner of his eye, Yamato saw that it was heading towards Taichi, and just when he thought it was going to pass by him, Leomon grabbed both Taichi and Agumon and threw them roughly onto the bed. Without losing altitude, the bed continued to fall towards water level.

"Leomon saved Taichi..."

That was the last of what Yamato could see. He did not know the result of the fight left between Leomon, the green demon, and that black demon.

The children's beds continued to fly through the night sky until they dropped into separate areas of land.

③ The Village of Beginnings

The long night finally broke into dawn. Takeru and Patamon kept still in the dark to hide themselves before the light arrived. The bed they had been riding on had fallen into a river and smashed into pieces of driftwood, no longer able to fly through the skies again. That was when they had found there had been a black gear fixed within the bed's frame.

"I wonder how my brother and everyone else is doing."

"I'm sure they're okay," Patamon replied. "They have my friends with them."

Among the group of seven Digimon, Patamon was the only one who had yet to evolve into a stronger form like everyone else. Whether Patamon's words were very persuasive or not, Takeru wasn't sure, but when the boy thought back, he remembered that he had been in a situation almost like this only a mere week ago: When he had been all alone and had first met Tokomon. At that time, the Digimon had been whiter, plumper, and hadn't looked very dependable, yet Takeru had not felt the least bit worried.

But in the first few days when the Digimon with black gears had attacked the group, none had specifically come after these two. That difference may end up having a bigger significance than they'd thought.

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When it got lighter, Takeru and Patamon began to walk while keeping very alert to their surroundings. Without a specific destination in mind, they decided in the meantime that they should head towards the distant silhouette of Infinity Mountain. By the afternoon, they had arrived in a village whose ground was as soft as a cushion.

There were very few places on this island that could be called a village. Of course, whenever they did reach a village, none of them housed humans only Digimon. However, this village was particularly restricted on what kinds of Digimon lived in it.

"The Village of Beginnings? Is that what this place is called?" Takeru asked the only Digimon there that was larger than Patamon. This Digimon was a fur-covered mammal that was as large as a dog, with androgynous features. What made it clear that this creature was not a normal animal but a Digimon was because of his many split-ended tails, and the fact that he could speak in human language.

"Yeah, that's right. All of the Digimon on this island are born in this village. That's why it's called the 'Village of Beginnings.' I'm Elecmon. I defend this place."

Elecmon showed them around the village. The buildings that surrounded it were made of a soft, fluffy material, with round corners that made them look like large, baby-proof toys. All of the Digimon who lived there were small, ranging in size from a rice ball to an average-sized melon.

"The only Digimon here are Baby Levels who have just been born. Once they evolve one level, they leave. But before that, someone has to protect them, feed them, and do all kinds of things to take care of them. I'm the one holding that responsibility right now."

Within the center of the village was another building made of a different substance. Within the round structure that looked similar to a silo were large, multi-colored eggs the size of an ostrich's that looked as if they had been painted into Easter eggs.

"This is a Digiegg. [13] All Digimon are born from this."

"Who laid this egg? A really big Digimon?"

His ears twitching at Takeru's question, Elecmon looked perplexed for the first time. "No, I don't think so. It just appears here before I even notice it. That's just how things are with Digieggs."

Right after he said that, one of the Digieggs began to tremble softly.

"Oh, it's about to hatch," Elecmon explained as he rushed over to it.

The Digiegg's shell cracked neatly in two and a small Digimon appeared from inside. The shell disintegrated into small fragments for an instant which fell away and turned into a cradle after the particles gathered underneath the infant Digimon.

"There, there, you're hungry aren't you? I'll get some food for you right now."

After asking Takeru and Patamon if they could watch over the baby, Elecmon ran off.

Takeru ogled the newborn Digimon. It looked soft and round, like a marshmallow. Although it was shaped differently, Takeru felt his breath taken away, as if he was looking at a human baby or that of a normal animal.

"Were you born here too, Patamon?"

"Hm? Well, I don't remember what happened when I was a baby. Do you, Takeru?"

"I..."

Takeru's earliest memory abruptly came back to him: His older brother gently shaking the rattle and playing with him. But why his brother? The next memory that came to him was when he was in kindergarten. His parents were arguing loudly about something. His brother went into the room they were in and spoke words he couldn't hear. Both of his parents became quiet.

A little while after that, he began to live alone with his mother. From then on, his brother always had a broody look on his face... even though the brother in his earliest memory was smiling happily...

"No, I guess I don't remember." He decided not to tell Patamon about it.

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The main dish that was served in this village was the fish that Elecmon caught in a nearby stream. With just one electric shock that he released from his tail feathers, he could gather a large number of them all at once. After the fish was grilled, both Takeru and Patamon ate their fill.

Neither of them realized that they were the most fortunate pair. The other children and Digimon fought for their lives as they were either attacked by Digimon that were controlled by black gears or chased by the green demon.

But by the time the sun began to sink over the horizon, the hand of darkness was already creeping towards the Village of Beginnings.

Atop a cliff that overlooked the village, there stretched a long man-like shadow with the large mane of a lion. The shadow unsheathed its sword with its left hand. The blade glittered as the sunlight reflected on it.

Patamon saw the light sparkling out of the corner of his eye. When he looked, he saw Leomon dashing down the side of the cliff so fast it looked like he was sliding down it.

"Takeru, run!"

Patamon still could not evolve to the next level and there wasn't a chance that he could win against Leomon as he was now. They also couldn't endanger the baby Digimon in this village. All they could do for now was flee.

"Hurry!"

Finally understanding the situation, Takeru ran after Patamon. The two of them hurriedly left the village to hide in the forest, but whenever they turned to look, they could still see Leomon chasing after them. He had already leapt down to ground level and was racing towards them. At this rate, he'd catch up to them at any second.

It was at that moment that a long line of blue fire shot out from within the forest. The flames slipped through the trees, past Takeru and Patamon, until they reached all the way to Leomon. Even Leomon had to stop to keep from being burned by the rush of flames.

"Takeru!"

Yamato's voice could be heard from the direction where the fire came. A blue wolf — Garurumon — was rushing out of the forest at full speed towards them. Straddled on his back was Takeru's older brother, Yamato.

"Brother!"

Yamato jumped down from Garurumon's back in front of Takeru and Patamon. "I'm sorry for getting here so late, Takeru!"



Having decelerated only enough for Yamato to get down, Garurumon dug his claws into the earth and shot out towards the edge of the forest, straight for Leomon. Leomon brandished his sword, which Garurumon repelled with his tough fur. Jumping back to gain distance, Leomon got back into position. The two glared at each other, but before either of them could make a move, Taichi's voice called out this time.

"Yamato!" From his position on Greymon's shoulder, who was approaching from the Village of Beginnings, Taichi held up the blue device over his head. "Use this light!"

Taichi remembered what he had seen from the top of his flying bed yesterday and immediately understood what Taichi meant. Running forward with his own blue device in hand, he held it out as he approached Leomon. As he drew closer to Leomon, the liquid crystal screen of the device began to glow.

Taichi got down from Greymon's shoulder and also advanced on Leomon. The lion Digimon tried to avoid the light shining from their devices by closing his eyes and shielding his face with his arm, but the quick movements he had shown previously had become much slower. When Taichi and Yamato finally thrust their devices directly at Leomon, light fell from all over Leomon's body, extending upwards to the height of a three-story building.

"That light!" Mimi shouted, pointing. Mimi and Koushiro had luckily been able to meet up and were riding on top of a giant beetle — Kabuterimon — that was flying in the skies about three kilometers away from the village.

"Grroooohhhhh!"

Leomon's mane stood on end as he let out a pained roar. The black gear began to rise out from within his back. His screams grew even deeper as the gear came out completely, and he fell to his knees. The gear ascended the skies lazily, trembled within the light and was smashed into little pieces.

The beam of light disappeared at the same moment when Leomon's eyes returned to normal, but it was enough time for Kabuterimon to pinpoint their location.

④ Chosen Children

"This machine is the holy device. It is often called the 'Digivice,'" Koushiro spoke as he held out the blue device in his hand.

The group was sitting around Leomon in the grasslands. Their Digimon had also returned to normal size.

"We were lost in an underground maze and discovered that it had wall paintings that spoke of a legend passed along from ancient times. Within its deepest depths was a large relief of this very machine. Apparently, it's a highly important object on this island. The Digimon that was defending the maze, Centarumon, told us about it."

The truth of the matter was, Centarumon had been controlled by a black gear and it hadn't been easy bringing him back to normal so they could get this information. But Koushiro did not mention that for now. There was no doubt in his mind that Taichi and the others had experienced the same troubles.

"Centarumon. Has he been doing well?"

Leomon's normal voice was deeply calm and composed. It wasn't that they were similar but, for some reason, Takeru thought of his father when he heard that voice. Yamato, on the other hand, was actually living with their father and even he could not say that that impression was completely wrong. [14]

Koushiro continued. "Yes. He told us that this Digivice is something that the 'Chosen Children' have."

Those were the exact words that Leomon said when he'd first attacked them.

"This world..... Kentarumon called it the 'Digital World' and apparently if this world is plunged into a danger that the Digimon themselves cannot handle, the 'Chosen Children' who have these Digivices will save it for them."

"Yes... That is how the legend goes," Leomon said, picking up the story. "The powers of darkness are increasing. Rumors had begun to spread among the Digimon recently, that the powers protecting this world were weakening and that the 'Chosen Children' would finally arrive to save it."

"Seven days ago, a new rumor sprang up that someone had seen something bright falling from the heavens and that it was the Chosen Children. However, at the same time, this was when the black gears began to fly. The gears drove the Digimon mad, ate into the earth, and emitted evil energy. When I discovered that they were coming from Infinity Mountain, I went there to put a stop to them."

Leomon's expression hardened. "It was along the way that I met Ogremon. He is the green Digimon."

The children learned of that green demon's name for the first time.

"For reasons I am unaware of, he regards me as his mortal enemy. He interrupted my ascent up the mountain

and challenged me to a final battle. I would never lose to the likes of him, but at that time he was already taken in by the powers of darkness. While OGREMON distracted my attention, DEVIMON appeared unexpectedly."

That was the name of the Digimon who looked like a demon.

"He buried a black gear inside of me and used me as his puppet. When he ordered me to attack you on Infinity Mountain, it was to test how strong all of your Digimon had become. The rest of this tale you know."

DEVIMON used his evil powers to place traps around the ruins of the mansion and waited for the children to fall asleep. If AGUMON hadn't felt an urge to go to the bathroom at that time, they might have fallen into *eternal* sleep. A collective shiver ran down the children's spines at that thought.

If TAICHI's Digivice hadn't released its light on LEOMON and driven the black gear out of him, they would have undoubtedly met a similar fate.

His senses returned to him, LEOMON's attack at DEVIMON made the evil Digimon lose control over the beds. When he became a shield for the children so they could make a safe escape, he ended up with another gear buried into him.

"Thank you, LEOMON. We were all saved because of you."

TAICHI felt that he couldn't let slip by this opportunity to finally express his gratitude. YAMATO and the others couldn't have heard him as they flew through the air, but that time... after throwing TAICHI and AGUMON onto the bed, LEOMON had gazed at them as they fell from that low height and had said,

"If the fates allow it, let us meet again!"

Surely, LEOMON had been prepared to die back then.

"You are our hope, Chosen Children," LEOMON continued. "You are the only ones who can defeat the powers of darkness."

"Chosen Children..." TAICHI murmured. He saw that the rest of the children were just as troubled as he was, even after LEOMON's words.

"The Digivices you are holding are more than enough proof that you are the Children. That also goes the same for your Digimon partners."

LEOMON went on to explain that when normal Digimon evolved, they did not return to their previous level. AGUMON and the others evolved to protect their partners and returned to their normal size. This was a special trait. "The Chosen Children have the power to make their Digimon evolve."

"But must we risk ourselves to beat that DEVIMON?" MIMI asked. "Is there no other option?"

"That is your mission... the mission of the Chosen Children," LEOMON answered, a difficult look flitting through his eyes. "But if you complete it, you may be able to return to your world."

"That's right," KOUSHIRO exclaimed as a memory struck him. "The engravings on the wall when we were in that cave, they mentioned that when the Chosen Children drive away the darkness, they will no longer be necessary in this world."

"I guess we have no other choice then," YAMATO said, his head bowed in thought. "But we should look for JYOU and SORA first. We'll need everyone if we want to beat that guy, at any rate."

"I understand that you are worried about your comrades, but it appears we're running out of time," LEOMON said as he pointed above them. Black gears were whizzing about in the sky that was approaching twilight. It was not one but many, a multitude, all of them heading towards Infinity Mountain. "He must be gathering up the evil powers. Those gears suck dry the energy from the lands and change it into power for the darkness."

Why was it then, that DEVIMON had laid so many elaborate traps to kill the children? Why the necessity of using LEOMON and OGREMON?

The answer to that must be because he was afraid of the power the children's six Digimon had when they evolved. DEVIMON himself may not have a very strong offense; but if he was gathering up the powers of darkness that could only mean that...

"He's trying to obtain more power."

If they don't beat him quickly to stop him from doing so, they may never be able to.

"Let's do it, guys," TAICHI said as he stood up. He turned resolutely to face Infinity Mountain. "We can't go back home until we beat him. Even if we stay here out of harm's way, we'll only end up being chased down."

⑤ Light and Dark

With Leomon in the lead, the children headed towards the mountain. Yamato really wished to leave Takeru in the village, but there was the danger that his little brother would be attacked if he was left alone.

"Besides," Leomon told them, as he thought back on while he was controlled by the black gear, "I remember being persistently ordered to kill the smallest child. I'm not sure of the reason behind that."

○

They could see an unfamiliar structure on top of Infinity Mountain. It was a stone building that looked like a Greek temple.

Nothing like that had been there yesterday.

Black gears flying through the air were sucked into that building one after the other. Each time that happened, something evil expanded from within. Even the children could feel it.

Dark clouds had assembled overhead before any of the children were even aware of them. Twenty meters up on the edge of the road from where they had begun climbing at the foot of the mountain, the children tilted their heads back to see something suddenly glint from within the white building that contrasted so deeply against the black clouds.

"L—Look!" Mimi shouted.

The building began to crumble. Something appeared to be swelling from the inside until it blew away the roof of the building.

What came out first were a pair of bat wings. As they stretched out, the body that they were attached to rose from within.

It was Devimon. But his size...

"Why, why is he so big?!" Mimi cried, her voice already risen in a frightened scream.

"He's absorbed the powers of darkness," Leomon snarled unhappily. "We're too late!"

Devimon spread his wings and flapped them once, lazily. As he swiveled in the air, he began to descend in front of Taichi and the others. They could clearly see how big he was as he drew closer. Devimon landed on the ground below them, his full height stretching much farther than the trees and his back towering before the children.

"Th—This can't be..." The group became speechless.

Devimon turned to face them, his enormous wings generating wind pressure that blew the children backwards until they smacked against the mountain surface.

"Fools. This place will become your graves."

Devimon raised one of his enormous hands to emit a ray of darkness. It bound the children so painfully that they couldn't move. None of them could lift a bone in their bodies.

Something shot out from the forest that stretched out behind Devimon. They were Ikkakumon's horns. The rapid fire of those horns threw off their covering in midair and the live missiles inside flew towards Devimon. The explosions continued consecutively.

"You did it, Ikkakumon!" They heard Jyou cry out from within the forest.

Devimon stopped radiating darkness and turned. This time, fireballs fell down from the sky. They were flung from the wings of Birdramon, Sora's Digimon.

"You guys! Evolve now while you still can!" Sora came racing up the mountain path. Both she and Jyou had sensed where the battle was taking place and had hurried to it, arriving just in time.

"All right, let's go!" Agumon stood up. The gauge of Taichi's Digivice jumped up.

"Agumon, evolve! Greymon!"

Gabumon, Tentomon, and Palmon also evolved.

All of them attacked simultaneously. Fire and electricity hit Devimon, and they all thought that their prospects had turned for the better. But their attacks had no effect on Devimon due to his colossal size.

"Clever of you," Devimon said with a sweep of his arm. All of their Digimon were knocked away as if they were insects that were hit by a rolled up newspaper.

"No way!" Taichi cried out. The children stared on, dumbfounded.

Devimon turned his back on them again and reached into the forest to pick up Ikkakumon with an outstretched hand. Ikkakumon was flung upwards until he hit Birdramon in the skies. Both fell to the ground without the least resistance.

Unsheathing his sword, Leomon leapt at Devimon's back to attack when all of a sudden, the upper half of Ogremon's body appeared from it.

"I'll be your opponent!" Ogremon sneered. He slammed his club downwards at Leomon, who was unable to change posture in mid-flight to avoid it. The lion Digimon received a direct hit and was struck towards the ground.

"I was changed into black gears and now I've become one with Devimon-sama! I won't be losing to you no more!" Laughing loudly in exaltation, Ogremon drew back into Devimon's body again.

Greymon and the others didn't give up just yet. Flying at Devimon, at his feet, hands and shoulders, they bit into him with their fangs and held on. But to Devimon, they were the size of mere toys.

"You worthless maggots!"

Releasing darkness from his entire body, Greymon and the other Digimon were blown away. As they fell to the ground, they found they couldn't move anymore.

"I'm sorry, Taichi," Greymon groaned in apology.

"I wanted to send Mimi back to her own world, but..." Togemon said, her voice trembling with tears.

The children couldn't move either. The frequent rays of darkness that had bound their bodies had left them feeling weak. Many of them felt faint, as if they would collapse into unconsciousness at any moment.

They saw Devimon slowly stretch out his hand. His fingers were heading towards the boy in the rear of the group, Takeru.

"The smallest child. With you gone, nothing will stand in my way," Devimon said with a malicious smirk.

"Run, Takeru!" Yamato shouted. But just like him, Takeru could not move.

A "pomph" "pomph" sound could be heard hitting against the palm of Devimon's approaching hand. Patamon was still by Takeru's side, using his sole weapon, "Air Shot." Inhaling air into his mouth, he shot it out tirelessly at high pressure.

But of course, that alone wouldn't stop Devimon's hand from moving.

"This isn't good enough." Patamon knew best how powerless he was. "Why? Why am I the only one who can't evolve?!"

He couldn't stop the tears that dripped down his cheeks. Nevertheless, he didn't give up releasing his Air Shot.

"I have to protect Takeru, I have to, Takeru, Takeru...!"

Already he was unable to continue shooting his Air Shot. Devimon's hand had formed around Takeru, getting ready to crush the boy to death in his grip.

"TAKERU!"

Patamon flew into that hand, just before it squeezed tightly around them.

By using only a mere amount of his strength, both Takeru and Patamon would be pulverized without leaving any identifiable traces. The corners of Devimon's mouth lifted, his smile reflecting the confidence he felt that he had won.

Some change took place inside that hand.

Scorching pain shot through Devimon's palm so suddenly that he involuntarily unclenched his fist. Light flooded out from within. Blinded by its brightness, Devimon drew back his hands to shield his eyes.

The light ascended to a high place above Devimon's head, and as it lessened, one could see the shape of a man lifted by six outstretched wings.

It made everyone think of the angel painting that hung on the wall of Devimon's mansion.

It was Patamon's evolved form, Angemon. His headpiece covering over his eyes, they saw his lips speak: "Your powers of darkness have grown too great, Devimon. You must be erased from this world."

Angemon knew what he had to do. Hoisting up the golden khakkhara he had over his head, he cried, "Come to me, oh holy powers!"

Taichi's, Yamato's, and everyone else's Digivices shot out beams of light. That light extended until they reached Angemon's upheld staff.

Light also shot out from the immobile bodies of the Digimon on the ground. All of the light was absorbed by the staff. Greymon and the others gave all of their power to Angemon and returned to their Child forms.

"If you do that, it will destroy you, too!"

Devimon had finally opened his eyes and seen what was being done. Angemon was amassing energy so explosive that it could obliterate his own body.

"But there is no other way," Angemon answered coldly.

Devimon was afraid. Even before this evolution, he knew that this Digimon would be his worst enemy. That was why he had attempted to end everything before this Digimon had a chance to evolve.

As if he sensed that fear, OGREMON flew out from Devimon's body and headed straight for Angemon.

"I can whup your ass!" he crowed.

Stretching his upper body, he brandished his club and it looked as if he could hit Angemon. But when he was touched by the light of Angemon's staff as it swung downward, OGREMON bounced backwards as if he had been hit.

The powers of darkness could not even bear to touch the holy powers. The momentum threw OGREMON back, so far that he flew out of Devimon's back and left a gaping hole that was once where his mass was.

"Oh no!"

Devimon tried to fill that hole to cover it up, but he never made it. Angemon concentrated all of the holy power within his body into his right fist and fired with one strike at the hole.

"Heaven's Knuckle!"

The golden light ripped through Devimon's chest and continued to expand, until everything visible in their surroundings was filled with light. Devimon's body, which had been made up of molecules of darkness, began to cave in from the inside out.

"What was the point in exhausting all of your power here, Angemon?" Half of Devimon's body had already disintegrated, yet he spoke as he disappeared, "There are more Digimon across the sea who have far greater powers of evil than I do! You guys are finished!"

With a final uproarious laugh, which echoed ominously long after he was gone, Devimon disappeared.

Angemon's body was also decaying and crumbling into particles. He looked down to gaze at Takeru, who was staring up at him with a stunned look.

"I'm sorry, Takeru."

"Angemon..." Takeru could only whisper.

"I'm sure we'll be able to meet again." Angemon smiled. "That is, if you wish for it."

With those last words, he disappeared into sparkling particles.

"ANGEMOOOOON!" Takeru screamed.

After he had begun to live separately from his father and brother, Takeru swore to himself that he never wanted to be separated from anyone ever again. But now, to be forced apart from Angemon... from Patamon like this, he had never... never...

Takeru was unable to understand what he was thinking or what he was feeling anymore, when several white feathers dropped gently before him. They were from Angemon's wings.

As they gathered into a neat pile, they turned into a round shape and became a large egg.

"It's a Digiegg."

In his state, Takeru did not know who had spoken up. Only vaguely did he sense that his brother, Taichi, Agumon, Gabumon, and everyone else were standing around him.

"Patamon is starting over again as a Digiegg."

"If you raise him up carefully, you'll surely see each other again."

Gently, Takeru embraced the egg in his arms.

○

It was only a little while afterwards that a mysterious hologram appeared in front of the group. Within the cylinder of rainbow-colored light stood an old man. He was the first human they'd seen upon coming to this island.



"I'm finally able to override the powers of darkness and contact you! You must listen very carefully to what I say now, Chosen Children."

The old man called himself "Gennai."

What he had to say was not very good news. The Chosen Children's mission did not end upon defeating Devimon. He said they must also cross the ocean to Server Continent, in order to defeat the source of the evil powers that was located there. Agumon and the other Digimon needed to evolve to a higher level. In order to do that, they must search for something called the "Crests."

At that point, static began to run through the hologram and cut him off. When they got a closer look, all they saw inside the ground was the face of something that looked like a projector.

"Let's go cross the ocean!"

It was Takeru who spoke up first. He didn't want to lose to anyone else anymore: That intention was written clearly all over his face.

The group had been hesitant over what to do, but his words firmed their resolve. In any case, even if they remained on this island, they wouldn't be able to return home.

Leomon and the other Digimon they had met on the island helped them to make a raft that was sturdy enough to cross the waters. They made one that was more than wide enough to carry all seven of the children and then some. Once they secured enough food, the children set sail: Towards the ocean, and towards Server Continent.

On top of that raft, the Digiegg that Takeru held in his arms hatched. The baby Digimon that was born from it immediately cried out, "Takeru."



HTTP://DIGITALSCRATCH.WORDPRESS.COM/

In the four corners of the world, four sets of light and darkness stood at odds.

Those on the side of the Light had large, beastlike shapes, while those on the side of Darkness varied. There was one shaped like a large dragon, another like a mechanical dinosaur, another the size of a human adult, while yet another was as small as a child. Although their shapes were different, all of them were Digimon.

News that the children had left File Island reached the dark Digimon that was shaped like a human adult. He cursed.

"That wretched Devimon failed!"

Yet he could not make a move. Currently, he needed all of his concentration to seal the Digimon of the Light that was coiled in front of him, its shining dragon-like form trapped as it squirmed unsuccessfully under his power.

It would take some time before its seal was completed.

FOOTNOTES

[11] カブトムシ

Kabuto mushi (Kabuterimon) = Rhinoceros beetle

[12] 生剥げ

A demon mask that is worn during a ritual that cleanses the souls and welcome the New Year. [[Wikipedia](#)]

[13] デジタマ

Digitama (translated as Digiegg)

[14] 「タケルは...父を思い浮かべた」

This is an allusion to the anime, where Leomon and the brothers' father, Hiroaki, were both voiced by Hirata Hiroaki.